



Peterson pinx.

A. Smith Sculp.

London. Printed for J. Bell, British Library, Strand, March 31 1792.



P. 1. 1. 1. 1.

A. Smith, del.

London. Printed for J. Ball, British Library, Strand, March 31. 1732.



ALL FOR LOVE;
OR,
THE WORLD WELL LOST.

A
TRAGEDY.

BY MR. DRYDEN.

ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRES-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,

By Permission of the Managers.

"The Lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation."

LONDON:

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of JOHN BELL,
British Library, STRAND,
Bookseller to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

M DCC XCII.



ALL FOR LOVE.

A MODERN would not have ventured to write upon a subject which SHAKSPERE had treated—so fully are we convinced of the unrivalled strength of his muse, and the irregular grandeur of his imagination.

That such efforts have been made by DRYDEN and by THOMSON, after the *Antony* and *Cleopatra* and *Coriolanus* of our Bard, must be ascribed to their habitual veneration for the scholastic regularity of the Greek drama—wanting this preservation of the unities, he wanted in their idea the principal ingredient of rational pleasure. Accordingly, the former professing to imitate his style, the latter without such profession, both equally unlike him, have given us tragedies upon the same subjects.

DRYDEN'S *All for Love* is the standard of what dramatically he could effect—it is written with the utmost strain of his powers, and abounds with varieties of poetic beauty—it is more regular, consistent, and florid than the play of Shakspeare; has less nerve, less nature, less action—It is like a French play translated.

The master scene between Antony and Ventidius is a copy from FLETCHER.—Ventidius is Melantius in the *Maids Tragedy*.

PROLOGUE.

WHAT flocks of critics hover here to-day,
As vultures wait on armies for their prey,
All gaping for the carcass of a play!
With croaking notes they bode some dire event,
And follow dying poets by the scent.
Ours gives himself for gone; you've watch'd your time:
He fights this day unarm'd, without his rhyme,
And brings a tale which often has been told,
As sad as Dido's, and almost as old.
His hero, whom you wits his bully call,
Bates of his mettle, and scarce rants at all:
He's somewhat lewd, but a well-meaning mind;
Weeps much, fights little, but is wondrous kind:
In short, a pattern and companion fit
For all the keeping tonies of the pit:
I cou'd name more; a wife and mistress too,
Both (to be plain) too good for most of you;
The wife well-natur'd, and the mistress true.

Now, Poets, if your fame has been his care,
Allow him all the candour you can spare.
A brave man scorns to quarrel once a-day,
Like Hector, in at ev'ry petty fray.
Let those find fault whose wit's so very small
They've need to show that they can think at all.
Errors, like straws, upon the surface flow;
He who would search for pearls must dive below:
Fops may have leave to level all they can,
As pigmies would be glad to lop a man.

*Half-wits are fleas, so little and so light,
We scarce could know they live but that they bite.
But as the rich, when tir'd with daily feasts,
For change become their next poor tenant's guests,
Drink hearty draughts of ale from plain brown bowls,
And snatch the homely rasher from the coals;
So you, retiring from much better cheer,
For once may venture to do penance here:
And since that plenteous autumn now is past,
Whose grapes and peaches have indulg'd your taste,
Take in good part from our poor Poet's board
Such rivell'd fruits as winter can afford.*

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

MARC ANTONY	-	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
VENTIDIUS, <i>his general</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. Harley.
DOLABELLA, <i>his friend</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. Farren.
ALEXAS, <i>the Queen's eunuch</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. Davies.
SERAPION, <i>priest of Isis</i>	-	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.
Romans	-	-	-	-	{ Mr. Evatt.
					{ Mr. Ledger.
MYRIS	-	-	-	-	- Mr. Thompson.

Women.

CLEOPATRA, <i>Queen of Egypt</i>	-	-	Mrs. Merry.
OCTAVIA, <i>Antony's wife</i>	-	-	Mrs. Pope.
CHARMION, } <i>Cleopatra's maids</i>	-	{	Mrs. Rock.
IRAS,			Miss Francis.
<i>Antony's two little daughters.</i>			

SCENE, *Alexandria.*



ALL FOR LOVE;
OR,
THE WORLD WELL LOST.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*The Temple of Isis. SERAPION, MYRIS, Priests of Isis,
discovered.*

Serapion.

PORTENTS and prodigies are grown so frequent,
That they have lost their name. Our fruitful Nile
Flow'd, ere the wonted season, with a torrent
So unexpected and so wondrous fierce,
That the wild deluge overtook the haste
Ev'n of the hinds that watch'd it. Men and beasts
Were borne above the tops of trees that grew
On th' utmost margin of the watermark :
Then with so swift an ebb the flood drove backward,
It slipt from underneath the scaly herd :
Here monstrous phocæ panted on the shore,
Forsaken dolphins there with their broad tails
Lay lashing the departing waves, hard by 'em
Sea-horses flound'ring in the slimy mud
Toss'd up their heads, and dash'd the ooze about 'em.

Hangs o'er us black and threat'ning, like a storm
Just breaking on our heads.

" *Ser.* Our faint Egyptians pray for Antony,
" But in their servile hearts they own Octavius.

" *Myr.* Why then does Antony dream out his hours, 50
" And tempts not fortune for a noble day,
" Which might redeem what Actium lost ?

" *Alex.* He thinks 'tis past recovery.

" *Ser.* Yet the foe
" Seems not to press the siege.

" *Alex.* Oh, there's the wonder.
" Mecænas and Agrippa, who can most
" With Cæsar, are his foes. His wife, Octavia,
" Driv'n from his house, solicits her revenge ;
" And Dolabella, who was once his friend, 60
" Upon some private grudge now seeks his ruin ;
" Yet still war seems on either side to sleep."

Ser. 'Tis strange that Antony, for some days past,
Has not beheld the face of Cleopatra,
But here in Isis' temple lives retir'd,
And makes his heart a prey to black despair.

Alex. 'Tis true ; and we much fear he hopes by absence
To cure his mind of love.

" *Ser.* If he be vanquish'd,
" Or make his peace, Egypt is doom'd to be 70
" A Roman province, and our plenteous harvests
" Must then redeem the scarceness of their soil.
" While Antony stood firm, our Alexandria
" Rivall'd proud Rome, (dominion's other seat)
" And fortune striding, like a vast Colossus,
" Could fix an equal foot of empire here.

" *Alex.* Had I my wish, these tyrants of all nature,
" Who lord it o'er mankind, should perish, perish,

“ Each by the other’s sword; but since our will
 “ Is lamely follow’d by our pow’r, we must
 “ Depend on one, with him to rise or fall.”

80

Ser. How stands the queen affected?

Alex. Oh, she dotes,

She dotes, Serapion, on this vanquish’d man,
 And winds herself about his mighty ruins,
 Whom, would she yet forsake, yet yield him up,
 This hunted prey, to his pursuer’s hands,
 She might preserve us all: but ’tis in vain——
 This changes my designs, this blasts my counsels,
 And makes me use all means to keep him here
 Whom I could wish divided from her arms
 Far as the earth’s deep centre. Well, you know
 The state of things: no more of your ill omens
 And black prognostics; labour to confirm
 The people’s hearts.

90

Enter VENTIDIUS, talking aside with a Gentleman of ANTONY’S.

Ser. These Romans will o’erhear us.
 But who’s that stranger? by his warlike part,
 His fierce demeanour, and erected look,
 He’s of no vulgar note.

Alex. Oh, ’tis Ventidius,

100

Our emperor’s great lieutenant in the east,
 Who first shew’d Rome that Parthia could be conquer’d.
 When Antony return’d from Syria last,
 He left this man to guard the Roman frontiers.

Ser. You seem to know him well.

Alex. Too well. I saw him in Cilicia first,
 When Cleopatra there met Antony:
 A mortal foe he was to us and Egypt.
 But let me witness to the worth I hate;

A braver Roman never drew a sword :
Firm to his prince ; but as a friend, not slave :
He ne'er was of his pleasures, but presides
O'er all his cooler hours and morning counsels :
In short, the plainness, fierceness, rugged virtue
Of an old true stamp'd Roman lives in him.
His coming bodes, I know not what, of ill
To our affairs. Withdraw to mark him better,
And I'll acquaint you why I sought you here,
And what's our present work.

110

*[They withdraw to a corner of the stage, and Ventidius,
with the other, comes forward to the front.]*

Vent. Not see him, say you !

120

I say, I must and will.

Gent. He has commanded,

On pain of death, none should approach his presence.

Vent. I bring him news will raise his drooping spirits,
Give him new life.

Gent. He sees not Cleopatra.

Vent. Would he had never seen her.

Gent. He eats not, drinks not, sleeps not, has no use
Of any thing but thought ; or if he talks,
'Tis to himself, and then 'tis perfect raving ;
Then he defies the world, and bids it pass.
Sometimes he gnaws his lips, and curses loud
The boy Octavius ; then he draws his mouth
Into a scornful smile, and cries, Take all,
The world's not worth my care.

130

Vent. Just, just his nature.

Virtue's his path, but sometimes 'tis too narrow
For his vast soul, and then he starts out wide,
And bounds into a vice that bears him far
From his first course, and plunges him in ills :

140

“ But when his danger makes him find his fault,
“ Quick to observe, and full of sharp remorse,
“ He censures eagerly his own misdeeds,
“ Judging himself with malice to himself,
“ And not forgiving what as man he did,
“ Because his other parts are more than man.”
He must not thus be lost.

[Alexas and the Priests come forward.]

Alex. You have your full instructions; now advance;
Proclaim your orders loudly.

Ser. Romans! Egyptians! hear the queen's command.
Thus Cleopatra bids: Let labour cease; 151
To pomp and triumphs give this happy day
That gave the world a lord; 'tis Antony's.
Live Antony, and Cleopatra live!
Be this the gen'ral voice sent up to Heav'n,
And ev'ry public place repeat this echo.

Vent. Fine pageantry! [Aside.]

Ser. Set out before your doors
The images of all your sleeping fathers
With laurels crown'd, with laurels wreath your posts, 160
And strew with flow'rs the pavement: let the priest
Do present sacrifice, pour out the wine,
And call the gods to join with you in gladness.

Vent. Curse on the tongue that bids this gen'ral joy;
Can they be friends of Antony, who revel
When Antony's in danger? Hide, for shame,
You Romans, your great grandsire's images,
For fear their souls should animate their marbles
To blush at their degenerate progeny.

Alex. A love, which knows no bounds to Antony, 170
Would mark the day with honours; when all Heav'n
Labour'd for him, when each propitious star

Stood wakeful in his orb to watch that hour,
 And shed his bitter influence, her own birth-day
 Our queen neglected, like a vulgar fate
 That pass'd obscurely by.

Vent. Would it had slept
 Divided far from his, till some remote
 And future age had call'd it out to ruin
 Some other prince, not him.

180

Alex. Your emperor,
 Tho' grown unkind, would be more gentle than
 T' upbraid my queen for loving him too well.

Vent. " Does the mute sacrifice upbraid the priest ?
 " He knows him not his executioner.
 " Oh! she has deck'd his ruin with her love,
 " Led him in golden bands to gaudy slaughter,
 " And made perdition pleasing : she has left him
 " The blank of what he was."

I tell thee, eunuch, she has quite unmann'd him :

190

Can any Roman see and know him now,
 Thus alter'd from the lord of half mankind,
 Unbent, unsinew'd, made a woman's toy,
 Shrunk from the vast extent of all his honours,
 And cramp'd within a corner of the world ?
 Oh, Antony !

Thou bravest soldier, and thou best of friends !

Bounteous as nature, next to nature's God !

Couldst thou but make new worlds, so wouldst thou give 'em,

As bounty were thy being. Rough in battle

200

As the first Romans when they went to war,

Yet after victory more pitiful

Than all their praying virgins left at home ?

Alex. Would you could add to those more shining virtues,
 His truth to her who loves him.

Vent. Would I could not,
 But wherefore waste I precious hours with thee?
 Thou art her darling mischief, her chief engine,
 Antony's other fate. Go tell thy queen
 Ventidius is arriv'd to end her charms.
 Let your Egyptian timbrels play alone,
 Nor mix effeminate sounds with Roman trumpets.
 You dare not fight for Antony; go pray,
 And keep your coward's holyday in temples.

210

[*Exeunt Alex. Serap.*]

Re-enter the Gentleman of MARC ANTONY.

Second Gent. The emperor approaches, and commands
 On pain of death that none presume to stay.

First Gent. I dare not disobey him.

[*Going out with the other.*]

Vent. Well, I dare;
 But I'll observe him first unseen, and find
 Which way his humour drives: the rest I'll venture.

220

[*Withdraws.*]

Enter ANTONY, walking with a disturbed motion before he speaks.

Ant. They tell me 'tis my birth-day, and I'll keep it
 With double pomp of sadness:
 'Tis what the day deserves which gave me breath.
 Why was I rais'd the meteor of the world,
 Hung in the skies, and blazing as I travell'd,
 Till all my fires were spent, and then cast downward
 To be trod out by Cæsar?

Vent. [*Aside.*] On my soul
 'Tis mournful, wondrous mournful!

Ant. Count thy gains
 Now Antony; wouldst thou be born for this?

230

Glutton of fortune, thy devouring youth
Has starv'd thy wanting age.

Vent. [*Aside.*] How sorrow shakes him!
So now the tempest tears him up by the roots;
And on the ground extends the noble ruin.

Ant. [*Having thrown himself down.*] Lie there, thou shadow of an emperor;

The place thou pressest on thy mother earth
Is all thy empire now: now it contains thee;
Some few days hence, and then 'twill be too large, 240
When thou'rt contracted in thy narrow urn.

Shrunk to a few cold ashes; then Octavia,
(For Cleopatra will not live to see it)
Octavia then will have thee all her own,
And bear thee in her widow'd hand to Cæsar;
"Cæsar will weep, the crocodile will weep,
"To see his rival of the universe
"Lie still and peaceful there." I'll think no more on't.
Give me some music; look that it be sad.

I'll sooth my melancholy till I swell, 250
And burst myself with sighing—— [*Soft music.*]

'Tis somewhat to my humour. Stay, I fancy
I'm now turn'd wild, a commoner of nature;
Of all forsaken, and forsaking all,
Live in a shady forest's sylvan scene,
Stretch'd at my length beneath some blasted oak,
I lean my head upon the mossy bark,
And look just of a piece as I grew from it:
My uncomb'd locks, matted like misletoe,
Hang o'er my hoary face; a murm'ring brook 260
Runs at my foot——

Vent. "Methinks I fancy
"Myself there too.

“ *Ant.* The herd come jumping by me,
“ And fearless quench their thirst while I look on,
“ And take me for their fellow-citizen.
“ More of this image, more ; it lulls my thoughts.”

[*Soft music again.*

Vent. I must disturb him : I can hold no longer.

[*Stands before him.*

Ant. [*Starting up.*] Art thou Ventidius ?

Vent. Are you Antony ?

270

I'm liker what I was than you to him
I left you last.

“ *Ant.* I'm angry.

“ *Vent.* So am I.”

Ant. I would be private. Leave me.

Vent. Sir, I love you,
And therefore will not leave you.

Ant. Will not leave me !

Where have you learnt that answer ? Who am I ?

Vent. My emperor : the man I love next Heav'n.

280

If I said more, I think 'twere scarce a sin :
You 're all that's good and godlike.

Ant. All that's wretched.

You will not leave me then ?

Vent. 'Twas too presuming
To say I would not ; but I dare not leave you ;
And 'tis unkind in you to chide me hence
So soon, when I so far have come to see you.

Ant. Now thou hast seen me, art thou satisfied ?
For if a friend thou hast beheld enough,
And if a foe too much.

290

Vent. Look, emperor, this is no common dew :

[*Weeping*

I have not wept this forty years ; but now

My mother comes afresh into my eyes :

I cannot help her softness.

Ant. By Heav'n, he weeps, poor good old man, he weeps !

“ The big round drops course one another down

“ The furrows of his cheeks. Stop 'em, Ventidius,

“ Or I shall blush to death ; they set my shame

“ That caus'd 'em full before me.

200

“ *Vent.* I'll do my best.”

Ant. Sure there's contagion in the tears of friends ;

See, I have caught it too. Believe me, 'tis not

For my own griefs but thine——Nay, farther——

Vent. Emperor.

Ant. Emperor ! why, that's the style of victory :

The conq'ring soldier, red with unfelt wounds,

Salutes his gen'ral so ; but never more

Shall that sound reach my ears.

Vent. I warrant you.

210

Ant. Actium ! Actium ! Oh——

Vent. It sits too near you.

Ant. Here, here it lies, a lump of lead by day,

And in my short distracted nightly slumbers

The hag that rides my dreams——

Vent. Out with it, give it vent.

Ant. Urge not my shame——

I lost a battle.

Vent. So has Julius done.

Ant. Thou favour'st me, and speak'st not half thou think'st ;

For Julius fought it out and lost it fairly ;

221

But Antony——

Vent. Nay, stop not.

Ant. Antony

(Well, thou wilt have it) like a coward fled,

Fled while his soldiers fought ; fled first, Ventidius.

Thou long'st to curse me, and I give thee leave ;

“ I know thou cam'st prepar'd to rail.

“ *Vent.* I did.”

Ant. I'll help thee—I have been a man, Ventidius. 230

Vent. Yes, and a brave one ; but——

Ant. I know thy meaning.

But I have lost my reason, have disgrac'd

The name of soldier with inglorious ease ;

“ In the full vintage of my flowing honours

“ Sat still, and saw it prest by other hands ;

“ Fortune came smiling to my youth, and woo'd it.

“ And purple greatness met my ripen'd years.

“ When first I came to empire, I was borne

“ On tides of people crowding to my triumphs, 240

“ The wish of nations, and the willing world

“ Receiv'd me as its pledge of future peace.

“ I was so great, so happy, so belov'd,

“ Fate could not ruin me, till I took pains,

“ And work'd against my Fortune, chid her from me,

“ And turn'd her loose ; yet still she came again,

“ My careless days and my luxurious nights

“ At length have weary'd her, and now she's gone,

“ Gone, gone, divorc'd for ever.” Help me, soldier,

To curse this madman, this industrious fool, 250

Who labour'd to be wretched. Pr'ythee curse me.

Vent. No.

Ant. Why ?

Vent. You are too sensible already

Of what you 'ave done, too conscious of your failings,

And like a scorpion whipt by others first

To fury, sting yourself in mad revenge.

I would bring balm, and pour it in your wounds,

Cure your distemper'd mind, and heal your fortunes.

Ant. I know thou wouldst.

260

Vent. I will.

“ *Ant.* Ha, ha, ha, ha!

“ *Vent.* You laugh.

“ *Ant.* I do, to see officious love

“ Give cordials to the dead.

“ *Vent.* You would be lost then?

“ *Ant.* I am.

“ *Vent.* I say you are not. Try your fortune.

Ant. I have to th’ utmost. Dost thou think me desperate

“ Without just cause? No, when I found all lost 270

“ Beyond repair, I hid me from the world,

“ And learn’d to scorn it here, which now I do

“ So heartily, I think it is not worth

“ The cost of keeping.

“ *Vent.* Cæsar thinks not so;

“ He’ll thank you for the gift he could not take.

“ You would be kill’d like Tully, would you? Do

“ Hold out your throat to Cæsar and die tamely.

“ *Ant.* No, I can kill myself, and so resolve.

“ *Vent.* I can die with you too when time shall serve; 280

“ But Fortune calls upon us now to live,

“ To fight, to conquer.”

Ant. Sure thou dream’st, Ventidius.

Vent. No, ’tis you dream; you sleep away your hours
In desp’rate sloth, miscall’d philosophy.

Up, up, for honour’s sake! twelve legions wait you,

And long to call you chief: by painful journies

I led ’em, patient both of heat and hunger,

Down from the Parthian marches of the Nile:

’Twill do you good to see their sun-burnt faces, 290

Their scarr’d cheeks, and chopt hands; there’s virtue in
’em:

They'll sell those mangled limbs at dearer rates
Than yon' trim bands can buy.

Ant. Where left you them?

Vent. I said in Lower Syria.

Ant. Bring 'em hither;
There may be life in these.

Vent. They will not come.

Ant. Why didst thou mock my hopes with promis'd aids
To double my despair? they're mutinous. 300

Vent. Most firm and loyal.

" *Ant.* Yet they will not march

" To succour me. Oh, trifier!

" *Vent.* They petition

" You would make haste to head 'em.

" *Ant.* I'm besieg'd.

" *Vent.* There's but one way shut up — How came I
hither?

" *Ant.* I will not stir.

" *Vent.* They would perhaps desire

" A better reason. 310

" *Ant.* I have never us'd

" My soldiers to demand a reason of

" My actions." Why did they refuse to march?

Vent. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.

Ant. What was't they said?

Vent. They said they would not fight for Cleopatra:
Why should they fight indeed to make her conquer,
And make you more a slave? to gain you kingdoms,
Which for a kiss at your next midnight feast
You'll sell to her?—" Then she new names her jewels, 320

" And calls this diamond such or such a tax;

" Each pendent in her ear shall be a province."

Ant. Ventidius, I allow your tongue free licence

On all my other faults, but on your life
No word of Cleopatra ; she deserves
More worlds than I can lose.

Vent. Behold, ye Pow'rs !

To whom you have entrusted humankind ;
See Europe, Afric, Asia, put in balance,
And all weigh'd down by one light worthless woman ! 330
“ I think the gods are Antonies, and give,
“ Like prodigals, this nether world away
“ To none but wasteful hands.”

Ant. You grow presumptuous.

Vent. I take the privilege of plain love to speak.

Ant. Plain love ! plain arrogance, plain insolence !
Thy men are cowards, thou an envious traitor,
Who under seeming honesty hath vented
The burden of thy rank o'erflowing gall.
Oh, that thou wert my equal, great in arms 240
As the first Cæsar was, that I might kill thee
Without stain to my honour !

Vent. You may kill me :

You have done more already, call'd me traitor.

Ant. Art thou not one ?

Vent. For shewing you yourself,
Which none else durst have done ? But had I been
That name, which I disdain to speak again,
I needed not have sought your abject fortunes,
Come to partake your fate, to die with you. 330
What hinder'd me t' 'ave led my conqu'ring eagles
To fill Octavius' bands ? I could have been
A traitor then, a glorious happy traitor,
And not have been so call'd.

Ant. Forgive me, soldier ;
I 'ave been too passionate.

Vent. You thought me false.
Thought my old age betray'd you. Kill me, sir,
Pray kill me: yet you need not; your unkindness
Has left your sword no work.

360

Ant. I did not think so;
I said it in my rage: pr'ythee forgive me.
Why didst thou tempt my anger by discov'ry
Of what I would not hear?

Vent. No prince, but you,
Could merit that sincerity I us'd,
Nor durst another man have ventur'd it:
" But you, ere love misled your wand'ring eyes,
" Were sure the chief and best of human race,
" Fram'd in the very pride and boast of nature;
" So perfect, that the gods who form'd you wonder'd
" At their own skill, and cry'd, A lucky hit
" Has mended our design. Their envy hinder'd,
" Else you had been immortal, and a pattern,
" When Heav'n would work for ostentation sake,
" To copy out again."

370

Ant. But Cleopatra——
Go on, for I can bear it now.

Vent. No more.

Ant. Thou dar'st not trust my passion, but thou may'st:
Thou only lov'st, the rest have flatter'd me.

381

Vent. Heav'n's blessing on your heart for that kind word!
May I believe you love me? Speak again.

Ant. Indeed I do. Speak this, and this, and this.

[Hugging him.]

Thy praises were unjust; but I'll deserve 'em,
And yet mend all. Do with me what thou wilt:
Lead me to victory, thou know'st the way.

Vent. And will you leave this——

Ant. Pr'ythee do not curse her,
And I will leave her, tho' Heav'n knows I love
Beyond life, conquest, empire, all but honour :
But I will leave her.

390

Vent. That's my royal master.
And shall we fight ?

Ant. I warrant thee, old soldier ;
Thou shalt behold me once again in iron,
And at the head of our old troops that beat
The Parthians, cry aloud, Come, follow me.

Vent. Oh, now I hear my emperor ! In that word
Octavius fell. Gods ! let me see that day.
And if I have ten years behind, take all ;
I'll thank you for th' exchange.

400

" *Ant.* Oh, Cleopatra !

" *Vent.* Again !

" *Ant.* I 'ave done ; in that last sigh she went.
" Cæsar shall know what 'tis to force a lover
" From all he holds most dear.

" *Vent.* Methinks you breathe
" Another soul ; your looks are most divine ;
" You speak a hero, and you move a god."

410

Ant. Oh, thou hast fir'd me ! my soul's up in arms,
And mans each part about me. Once again
That noble eagerness of fight has seiz'd me,
That eagerness with which I darted upward
To Cassius' camp : in vain the steepy hill
Oppos'd my way, in vain a war of spears
Sung round my head, and planted all my shield ;
I won the trenches, while my foremost men
Lagg'd on the plain below.

Vent. Ye gods, ye gods,
For such another honour !

420

Ant. Come on, my soldier;
 Our hearts and arms are still the same: I long
 Once more to meet our foes, that thou and I,
 Like Time and Death, marching before our troops, 425
 May taste fate to 'em, mow 'em out a passage,
 And, ent'ring where the foremost squadrons yield,
 Begin the noble harvest of the field. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A grand Saloon. Enter CLEOPATRA, IRAS, and ALEXAS.

Cleopatra.

WHAT shall I do, or whither shall I turn!
 Ventidius has o'ercome, and he will go.

Alex. He goes to fight for you.

Cleo. Then he would see me ere he went to fight.
 Flatter me not; if once he goes he's lost,
 And all my hopes destroy'd.

Alex. Does this weak passion
 Become a mighty queen?

Cleo. I am no queen:
 If this to be a queen to be besieg'd 10
 By yon' insulting Roman, and to wait
 Each hour the victor's chain? These ills are small,
 For Antony is lost, and I can mourn
 For nothing else but him. Now come, Octavius;
 I have no more to lose; prepare thy bands;
 I'm fit to be a captive: Antony
 Has taught my mind the fortune of a slave.

Iras. Call reason to assist you.

Cleo. I have none,
And none would have : my love's a noble madness, 20
Which shews the cause deserv'd it. Moderate sorrow
Fits vulgar love, and for a vulgar man ;
But I have lov'd with such transcendent passion,
I soar'd at first quite out of reason's view,
And now am lost above it—" No, I'm proud
" 'Tis thus : would Antony could see me now :
" Think you he would not sigh ? tho' he must leave me
" Sure he would sigh, for he is noble-natur'd,
" And bears a tender heart : I know him well :
" Ah, no ! I know him not : I knew him once, 30
" But now 'tis past.
" *Iras.* Let it be past with you :
" Forget him, madam.
" *Cleo.* Never, never, *Iras* :
" He once was mine, and once, tho' now 'tis gone,
" Leaves a faint image of possession still.
" *Alex.* Think him inconstant, cruel, and ungrateful.
" *Cleo.* I cannot; if I could those thoughts were vain :
" Faithless, ungrateful, cruel, tho' he be,
" I still must love him," 40

Enter CHARMION.

Now, what news, my Charmion ?
Will he be kind ? and will he not forsake me ?
Am I to live or die ? " Nay, do I live,
" Or am I dead ? for when he gave his answer
" Fate took the word, and then I liv'd or dy'd."
Char. I found him, madam—
Cleo. A long speech preparing !
If thou bring'st comfort, haste and give it me,
For never was more need.

Iras. I know he loves you.

50

Cleo. Had he been kind, her eyes had told me so
Before her tongue could speak it : now she studies
To soften what he said : but give me death
Just as he sent it, Charmion, undisguis'd,
And in the words he spoke.

Char. I found him, then,
Encompass'd round, I think, with iron statues,
So mute, so motionless, his soldiers stood,
While awfully he cast his eyes about,
And ev'ry leader's hopes and fears survey'd ;
Methought he look'd resolv'd, and yet not pleas'd :
When he beheld me struggling in the crowd,
He blush'd and bade make way.

60

Alex. There's comfort yet.

Char. Ventidius fix'd his eyes upon my passage
Severely, as he meant to frown me back,
And sullenly gave place. I told my message
Just as you gave it, broken and disorder'd ;
I number'd in it all your sighs and tears,
And while I mov'd your pitiful request,
That you but only begg'd a last farewell,
He fetch'd an inward groan, and ev'ry time
I nam'd you, sigh'd as if his heart were breaking,
But shunn'd my eyes, and guiltily look'd down.
He seem'd not now that awful Antony
Who shook an arm'd assembly with his nod,
But making show as he would rub his eyes,
Disguis'd and blotted out a falling tear.

70

Cleo. Did he then weep ; and was I worth a tear ?
If what thou hast to say be not as pleasing,
Tell me no more, but let me die contented.

80

Char. He bid me say, He knew himself so well

He could deny you nothing if he saw you,
And therefore——

Cleo. Thou wouldst say he would not see me.

Char. And therefore begg'd you not to use a pow'r
Which he could ill resist ; yet he should ever
Respect you as he ought.

Cleo. Is that a word
For Antony to use to Cleopatra ? 90
Oh, that faint word, Respect ! how I disdain it !
Disdain myself for loving after it !
“ He should have kept that word for cold Octavia ;
“ Respect is for a wife. Am I that thing,
“ That dull insipid lump, without desires,
“ And without power to give 'em ?”

Alex. You misjudge ;
You see thro' love, and that deludes your sight,
“ As what is straight seems crooked thro' the water ;”
But I who bear my reason undisturb'd 100
Can see this Antony, this dreaded man,
A fearful slave, who fain would run away,
And shuns his master's eyes ; if you pursue him,
My life on't, he still drags a chain along
That needs must clog his flight.

Cleo. Could I believe thee——

Alex. By ev'ry circumstance I know he loves.
True, he's hard prest by int'rest and by honour ;
Yet he but doubts and parlies, and casts out
Many a long look for succour. 110

Cleo. He sends word
He fears to see my face.

Alex. And would you more ?
He shows his weakness who declines the combat ;
And you must urge your fortune. Could he speak

More plainly? to my ears the message sounds,
 Come to my rescue, Cleopatra, come;
 Come, free me from Ventidius, from my tyrant;
 See me, and give me a pretence to leave him. [A march.
 I hear his trumpets. This way he must pass. 120
 Please you retire a while; I'll work him first,
 That he may bend more easy.

Cleo. You shall rule me,

But all, I fear, in vain.

[Exit with Char. and Iras

Alex. I fear so too,

Tho' I conceal'd my thoughts to make her bold;

But 'tis our utmost means, and fate befriend it.

[Withdraws. A march till all are on.

*Enter Liſtors with fasces, one bearing the Eagle; then enter AN-
 TONY and VENTIDIUS, followed by other Commanders.*

Ant. Octavius is the minion of blind Chance,
 But holds from virtue nothing.

Vent. Has he courage?

130

Ant. But just enough to season him from coward.
 Oh! 'tis the coldest youth upon a charge,
 The most deliberate fighter! if he ventures
 (As in Ilyria once they say he did)
 To storm a town 'tis when he cannot choose,
 When all the world have fixt their eyes upon him;
 And then he lives on that for sev'n years after:
 But at a close revenge he never fails.

Vent. I heard you challeng'd him.

Ant. I did, Ventidius:

140

What think'st thou was his answer? 'twas so tame—
 He said he had more ways than one to die,
 I had not.

Vent. Poor!

Ant. He has more ways than one,
But he would choose 'em all before that one.

Vent. He first would choose an ague or a fever.

Ant. No, it must be an ague, not a fever;
He has not warmth enough to die by that.

Vent. Or old age and a bed.

150

Ant. Ay, there's his choice;
He would live like a lamp to the last wink,
And crawl upon the utmost verge of life.
Oh, Hercules! why should a man like this,
Who dares not trust his fate for one great action,
Be all the care of Heav'n? why should he lord it
O'er fourscore thousand men, of whom each one
Is braver than himself?

"*Vent.* You conquer'd for him:

"*Philippi* knows it: there you shar'd with him

160

"That empire which your sword made all your own.

"*Ant.* Fool that I was! upon my eagle's wings

"I bore this wren till I was tir'd with soaring,

"And now he mounts above me.

"Good Heav'ns! is this, is this the man who braves me,

"Who bids my age make way, drives me before him

"To the world's ridge, and sweeps me off like rubbish?"

Vent. Sir, we lose time; the troops are mounted all.

Ant. Then give the word to march:

I long to leave this prison of a town

170

To join thy legions, and in open field

Once more to show my face. Lead, my deliverer.

Enter ALEXAS.

Alex. Great emperor,
In mighty arms renown'd above mankind,
But in soft pity to th' oppress'd a god,

This message sends the mournful Cleopatra
To her departing lord.

Vent. Smooth sycophant!

Alex. A thousand wishes, and ten thousand pray'rs,
Millions of blessings, wait you to the wars; 180
Millions of sighs and tears she sends you too,
And would have sent

“ As many dear embraces to your arms.”

As many parting kisses to your lips,
But those she fears have weary'd you already.

Vent. [*Aside.*] False crocodile!

Alex. And yet she begs not now you would not leave her;
That were a wish too mighty for her hopes,
And too presuming (for her low fortune and your ebbing
love),

That were a wish for her most prosp'rous days, 190
Her blooming beauty, and your growing kindness.

Ant. [*Aside.*] Well, I must man it out—What would the
Queen?

Alex. First, to these noble warriors who attend
Your daring courage in the chase of fame
(Too daring and too dang'rous for her quiet)
She humbly recommends all she holds dear,
All her own cares and fears, the care of you.

Vent. Yes, witness Actium.

Ant. Let him speak, Ventidius.

Alex. You, when his matchless valour bears him forward
With ardour too heroic on his foes, 201
Fall down as she would do before his feet,
Lie in his way, and stop the paths of Death;
Tell him this god is not invulnerable,
That absent Cleopatra bleeds in him;
And, that you may remember her petition,

She begs you wear these trifles as a pawn,
Which at your wish'd return she will redeem

[Gives jewels to the Commanders.]

With all the wealth of Egypt.

This to the great Ventidius she presents,
Whom she can never count her enemy,
Because he loves her lord.

210

Vent. Tell her I'll none on't;
I'm not ashamed of honest poverty:
Not all the diamonds of the East can bribe
Ventidius from his faith. I hope to see
These and the rest of all her sparkling store
Where they shall more deservingly be plac'd.

Ant. And who must wear 'em then?

Vent. The wrong'd Octavia.

220

Ant. You might have spar'd that word.

Vent. And she that bribe.

Ant. But have I no remembrance?

Alex. Yes, a dear one;
Your slave, the queen——

Ant. My mistress.

Alex. Then your mistress.
Your mistress would, she says, have sent her soul,
But that you had long since: she humbly begs
This ruby bracelet, set with bleeding hearts,
(The emblems of her own) may bind your arm.

230

[Presenting a bracelet.]

Vent. Now, my best lord, in honour's name I ask you,
For manhood's sake, and for your own dear safety,
Touch not these poison'd gifts,
Infected by the sender; touch 'em not;
Myriads of bluest plagues lie underneath 'em,
And more than aconite has dipt the silk.

Ant. Nay, now you grow too cynical, Ventidius ;
 A lady's favours may be worn with honour.
 What, to refuse her bracelet ! on my soul,
 When I lie pensive in my tent alone,
 'Twill pass the wakeful hours of winter nights
 To tell these pretty beads upon my arm,
 To count for ev'ry one a soft embrace,
 A melting kiss at such and such a time,
 And now and then the fury of her love,
 When——And what harm's in this ?

240

Alex. None, none, my lord,
 But what's to her, that now 'tis past for ever.

249

Ant. [*Going to tie it.*] We soldiers are to awkward——help
 me to tie it.

Alex. In faith, my lord, we courtiers too are awkward
 In these affairs ; so are all men indeed ;
 “ Ev'n I who am not one.” But shall I speak ?

Ant. Yes, freely.

Alex. Then, my lord, fair hands alone
 Are fit to tie it ; she who sent it can.

Vent. Hell ! death ! this eunuch pander ruins you.
 You will not see her ?

[*Alexas whispers an Attendant, who goes out.*]

Ant. But to take my leave.

259

Vent. Then I have wash'd an Ethiop. Y' are undone !
 Y' are in the toils ! y' are taken ! y' are destroy'd !
 Her eyes do Cæsar's work.

Ant. You fear too soon :
 I'm constant to myself : I know my strength ;
 And yet she shall not think me barb'rous neither,
 Born in the deeps of Afric : I'm a Roman,
 Bred to the rules of soft humanity.
 A guest, and kindly us'd, should bid farewell.

Vent. You do not know
How weak you are to her, how much an infant ; 270
You are not proof against a smile or glance ;
A sigh will quite disarm you.

Ant. See, she comes !
Now you shall find your error. Gods ! I thank you ;
I form'd the danger greater than it was,
And now 'tis near 'tis lessen'd.

Vent. Mark the end yet.

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS.

Ant. Well, madam, we are met.

Cleo. Is this a meeting !
Then we must part ! 280

Ant. We must.

Cleo. Who says we must ?

Ant. Our own hard fates.

Cleo. We make those fates ourselves.

Ant. Yes, we have made 'em ; we have lov'd each other
Into our mutual ruin.

Cleo. The gods have seen my joys with envious eyes ;
“ I have no friends in heav'n ;” and all the world
(As 'twere the bus'ness of mankind to part us)
Is arm'd against my love ; ev'n you yourself 290
Join with the rest : you, you are arm'd against me.

Ant. I will be justify'd in all I do
To late posterity, and therefore hear me.
If I mix a lie
With any truth, reproach me freely with it.
Else favour me with silence.

Cleo. You command me,
And I am dumb.

Vent. I like this well : he shows authority.

Ant. That I derive my ruin
From you alone——

300

Cleo. Oh, Heav'n's! I ruin you!

Ant. You promis'd me your silence, and you break it
Ere I have scarce begun.

Cleo. Well, I obey you.

Ant. When I beheld you first it was in Egypt,
Ere Cæsar saw your eyes: you gave me love,
And were too young to know it. That I settled
Your father in his throne was for your sake;
I left th' acknowledgment for time to ripen.
Cæsar stepp'd in, and with a greedy hand
Pluck'd the green fruit ere the first blush of red
Yet cleaving to the bough. He was my lord,
And was beside too great for me to rival:
But I deserv'd you first tho' he enjoy'd you.
When after I beheld you in Cilicia
An enemy to Rome, I pardon'd you.

310

Cleo. I clear'd myself——

Ant. Again you break your promise.
I lov'd you still, and took your weak excuses,
Took you into my bosom stain'd by Cæsar,
And not half mine: I went to Egypt with you,
And hid me from the bus'ness of the world,
Shut out inquiring nations from my sight
To give whole years to you.

320

Vent. Yes, to your shame be't spoken.

[*Aside.*

Ant. How I lov'd,
Witness ye days and nights, and all ye hours,
That danc'd away with down upon your feet,
As all your bus'ness were to count my passion.
One day past by and nothing saw but love;
Another came, and still 'twas only love:

330

The suns were weary'd out with looking on,
And I untir'd with loving.

I saw you ev'ry day, and all the day,
And ev'ry day was still but as the first,
So eager was I still to see you more.

Vent. 'Tis all too true.

Ant. Fulvia, my wife, grew jealous,
As she indeed had reason, rais'd a war
In Italy to call me back.

340

Vent. But yet
You went not.

Ant. While within your arms I lay
The world fell mould'ring from my hands each hour,
And left me scarce a grasp ; I thank your love for't.

Vent. Well push'd : that last was home.

Cleo. Yet may I speak ?

Ant. If I have urg'd a falsehood, yes ; else not.
Your silence says I have not. Fulvia dy'd :
(Pardon, you gods ! with my unkindness dy'd.)

350

To set the world at peace, I took Octavia,
This Cæsar's sister. In her pride of youth
And flow'r of beauty did I wed that lady,
Whom, blushing, I must praise, altho' I left her.
You call'd ; my love obey'd the fatal summons :
This rais'd the Roman arms ; the cause was yours.
I would have fought by land, where I was stronger ;
You hinder'd it ; yet when I fought at sea
Forsook me fighting ; and, oh stain to honour !
Oh lasting shame ! I knew not that I fled,
But fled to follow you.

360

Vent. What haste she made to hoist her purple sails !
And, to appear magnificent in flight,
Drew half our strength away.

Ant. All this you caus'd :

And would you multiply more ruins on me ?
 This honest man, my best, my only friend,
 Has gather'd up the shipwreck of my fortunes :
 Twelve legions I have left, my last recruits, 370
 And you have watch'd the news, and bring your eyes
 To seize them too. If you have aught to answer,
 Now speak, you have free leave.

Alex. She stands confounded :

Despair is in her eyes. [*Aside.*

Vent. Now lay a sigh i' th' way to stop his passage ;
 Prepare a tear, and bid it for his legions :
 'Tis like they shall be sold.

Cleo. How shall I plead my cause, when you, my judge,
 Already have condemn'd me ? Shall I bring 380
 The love you bore me for my advocate ?
 That now is turn'd against me, that destroys me ;
 For love, once past, is at the best forgotten,
 But oftner sours to hate. It will please my lord
 To ruin me, and therefore I'll be guilty ;
 But could I once have thought it would have pleas'd you,
 That you would pry with narrow searching eyes
 Into my faults, severe to my destruction,
 And watching all advantages with care
 That serve to make me wretched ! Speak, my lord, 390
 For I end here. 'Tho' I deserve this usage,
 Was it like you to give it ?

Ant. Oh, you wrong me

To think I sought this parting, or desir'd
 To accuse you more than what will clear myself,
 And justify this breach.

Cleo. Thus low I thank you,

And since my innocence will not offend
I shall not blush to own it.

Vent. After this,
I think she'll blush at nothing.

400

Cleo. You seem griev'd
(And therein you are kind) that Cæsar first
Enjoy'd my love, tho' you deserv'd it better ;
For had I first been yours, it would have sav'd
My second choice ; I never had been his,
And ne'er had been but yours. But Cæsar first,
You say, possess'd my love. Not so, my lord :
He first possess'd my person, you my love :
Cæsar lov'd me, but I lov'd Antony :

410

“ If I endur'd him after, 'twas because
“ I judg'd it due to the first name of men ;
“ And half constrain'd I gave, as to a tyrant,
“ What he would take by force.”

Vent. Oh, Siren ! Siren !
Yet grant that all the love she boasts were true,
Has she not ruin'd you ? I still urge that,
The fatal consequence.

Cleo. The consequence indeed,
For I dare challenge him, my greatest foe,
To say it was design'd. It is true I lov'd you,
And kept you far from an uneasy wife,
Such Fulvia was.

420

Yes : but he'll say you left Octavia for me :
And can you blame me to receive that love
Which quitted such desert for worthless me ?
How often have I wish'd some other Cæsar,
Great as the first, and as the second young,
Would court my love to be refus'd for you !

Vent. Words, words ! but Actium, sir, remember Actium !

Cleo. Ev'n there I dare his malice. True, I counsell'd 431
To fight at sea ; but I betray'd you not :
I fled, but not to the enemy. 'Twas fear :
Would I had been a man not to have fear'd,
For none would then have envy'd me your friendship
Who envy me your love.

Ant. We're both unhappy :
If nothing else, yet our ill fortune parts us.
Speak ! would you have me perish by my stay ?

Cleo. If, as a friend, you ask my judgment, go ; 440
If, as a lover, stay. If you must perish—
'Tis a hard word : but stay.

Vent. See now th' effects of her so boasted love !
She strives to drag you down to ruin with her ;
But could she 'scape without you, oh, how soon
Would she let go her hold, and haste to shore,
And never look behind !

Cleo. Then judge my love by this.

[*Giving Antony a writing.*]

Could I have borne
A life or death, a happiness or wo, 450
From yours divided, this had giv'n me means.

Ant. By Hercules the writing of Octavius !
“ I know it well : 'tis that proscribing hand,
“ Young as it was, that led the way to mine,
“ And left me but the second place in murder”——
See, see, Ventidius ! here he offers Egypt,
And joins all Syria to it as a present,
So in requital she forsakes my fortunes,
And joins her arms with his.

Cleo. And yet you leave me ! 460
You leave me, Antony ; and yet I love you !
Indeed I do ! I have refus'd a kingdom,

That's a trifle ;
For I could part with life, with any thing,
But only you. Oh let me die but with you !
Is that a hard request ?

Ant. Next living with you
'Tis all that Heav'n can give.

“ *Alex.* He melts ; we conquer.” [*Aside.*

Cleo. No, you shall go ; your int'rest calls you hence :
Yes, your dear int'rest pulls too strong for these 471
Weak arms to hold you here—— [*Takes his hand.*
Go, leave me, soldier,

(For you're no more a lover) leave me dying ;
Push me all pale and panting from your bosom,
And when your march begins let one run after,
Breathless almost for joy, and cry, She's dead !
The soldiers shout. You then perhaps may sigh,
And muster all your Roman gravity ;
Ventidius chides, and straight your brow clears up 480
As I had never been.

Ant. Gods ! 'tis too much ! too much for man to bear !

Cleo. What is't for me then,
A weak forsaken woman and a lover ?
Here let me breathe my last ; envy me not
This minute in your arms ! I'll die “ apace,
“ As fast as e'er I can,” and end your trouble.

Ant. Die !—rather let me perish, loosen'd nature
Leap from its hinges, sink the props of heav'n,
And fall the skies to crush the nether world ! 490
My eyes ! my soul ! my all ! [*Embraces her.*

“ *Vent.* And what's this toy

“ In balance with your fortune, honour, fame ?

“ *Ant.* What is't Ventidius ? it outweighs them all.

“ Why, we have more than conquer'd Cæsar now ;

" My queen's not only innocent but loves me.
" This, this is she who drags me down to ruin !"
But could she 'scape without me, with what haste
Would she let slip her hold, and make to shore
And never look behind !

500

Down on thy knees, blasphemers as thou art,
And ask forgiveness of wrong'd innocence.

Vent. I'll rather die than take it. Will you go ?

Ant. Go ! whither ! go from all that's excellent !

" Faith, honour, virtue, all good things, forbid
" That I should go from her who sets my love
" Above the price of kingdoms." Give, you gods !
Give to your boy, your Cæsar,
This rattle of a globe to play withal,
This gewgaw world, and put him cheaply off,
I'll not be pleas'd with less than Cleopatra.

510

Cleo. She's wholly yours. My heart's so full of joy
That I shall do some wild extravagance
Of love in public, and the foolish world,
Which knows not tenderness, will think me mad.

Vent. Oh, women ! women ! women ! all the gods
Have not such power of doing good to man
As you of doing harm.

[Exit.

Ant. Our men are arm'd :

Unbar the gate that looks to Cæsar's camp ;
I would revenge the treachery he meant me,
And long security makes conquest easy.

520

I'm eager to return before I go,
For all the pleasures I have known beat thick
On my remembrance. How I long for night !
That both the sweets of mutual love may try,
And triumph once o'er Cæsar ere we die.

Exeunt.

ACT III. SCENE I.

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, IRAS, ALEXAS, and a train of Egyptians, ANTONY and Romans; Cleopatra crowns Antony.

Antony.

“ I THOUGHT how those white arms would fold me in

“ And strain me close and melt me into love :

“ So pleas'd with that sweet image I sprung forwards,

“ And added all my strength to ev'ry blow.

“ *Cleo.* Come to me, come, my soldier, to my arms,

“ You've been too long away from my embraces ;

“ But when I have you fast, and all my own,

“ With broken murmurs and with am'rous sighs

“ I'll say you are unkind, and punish you,

“ And mark you red with many an eager kiss.”

10

Ant. My brighter Venus !

Cleo. Oh, my greater Mars !

Ant. Thou join'st us well my love.

“ Suppose me come from the Phlegræan plains,

“ Where gasping giants lay cleft by my sword,

“ And mountain-tops par'd off each other blow

“ To bury those I slew : receive me, goddess !

“ Let Cæsar spread his subtle nets like Vulcan,

“ In thy embraces I would be beheld

“ By heav'n and earth at once,

20

“ And make their envy what they meant their sport.

“ Let those who took us blush ; I would love on

“ With awful state, regardless of their frowns,

“ As their superior god.”

There's no satiety of love in thee :

Enjoy'd thou still art new ; perpetual spring
Is in thy arms ; the ripen'd fruit but falls,
And blossoms rise to fill its empty place,
And I grow rich by giving.

Enter VENTIDIUS, and stands apart.

Alex. Oh, now the danger's past, your general comes, 30
He joins not in your joys, nor minds your triumphs,
But with contracted brows looks frowning on,
As envying your success.

Ant. Now on my soul he loves me, truly loves me ;
He never flatter'd me in any vice,
But awes me with his virtue : ev'n this minute
Methinks he has a right of chiding me.
Lead to the temple ; I'll avoid his presence ;
It checks too strong upon me. [*Exeunt the rest.*

[*As Antony is going Ventidius pulls him by the robe.*

Vent. Emperor ! 40

Ant. 'Tis the old argument ; I pr'ythee spare me. [*Looking back.*

Vent. But this one hearing, emperor.

Ant. Let go
My robe, or by my father Hercules——

Vent. By Hercules' father—that's yet greater,
I bring you somewhat you would wish to know.

Ant. Thou seest we are observ'd ; attend me here,
And I'll return. [*Exit.*

Vent. I'm waning in his favour, yet I love him ;
I love this man who runs to meet his ruin ! 50
And sure the gods like me are fond of him :
His virtues lie so mingled with his crimes,
As would confound their choice to punish one
And not reward the other.

Enter ANTONY.

Ant. We can conquer
You see without your aid :
We have dislodg'd their troops.
“ They look on us at distance, and like curs,
“ 'Scap'd from the lion's paws, they bay far off,
“ And lick their wounds, and faintly threaten war.” 60
Five thousand Romans, with their faces upward,
Lie breathless on the plain. L

Vent. 'Tis well ; and he
Who lost 'em could have spar'd ten thousand more :
Yet if by this advantage you could gain
An easier peace, while Cæsar doubts the chance
Of arms——

Ant. Oh, think not on't, Ventidius !
The boy pursues my ruin ; he'll no peace !
“ His malice is consid'rate in advantage : 70
“ Oh, he's the coolest murderer ! so staunch,
“ He kills and keeps his temper.”

Vent. Have you no friend
In all his army who has pow'r to move him ?
Mæcenus or Agrippa might do much.

“ *Ant.* They're both too deep in Cæsar's interests.
“ We'll work it out by dint of sword, or perish.

“ *Vent.* Fain I would find some other.

“ *Ant.* Thank thy love. 80
“ Some four or five such victories as this
“ Will save thy farther pains.

“ *Vent.* Expect no more ; Cæsar is on his guard.
“ I know, sir, you have conquer'd against odds ;
“ But still you draw supplies from one poor town,
“ And of Egyptians ; he has all the world,

“ And at his beck nations come pouring in
 “ To fill the gaps you make.” Pray think again.

Ant. Why dost thou drive me from myself to search
 For foreign aids, to hunt my memory,
 And range all o’er a wide and barren place
 To find a friend? The wretched have no friends——
 Yet I have one, the bravest youth of Rome,
 Whom Cæsar loves beyond the love of women;

90

“ He could resolve his mind as fire does wax,
 “ From that hard rugged image melt him down,
 “ And mould him in what softer form he pleas’d.”

Vent. Him would I see, that man of all the world!
 Just such a one we want.

Ant. He lov’d me too;
 I was his soul; he liv’d not but in me:
 We were so clos’d within each other’s breasts,
 The rivets were not found that join’d us first
 “ That do not reach us yet: we were so mixt
 “ As meeting streams, both to ourselves were lost:
 “ We were one mass: we could not give or take
 “ But from the same; for he was I, I he.

100

“ *Vent.* He moves as I would wish him.

[*Aside.*

“ *Ant.*” After this

I need not tell his name: ’twas Dolabella.

Vent. He’s now in Cæsar’s camp.

110

Ant. No matter where,

Since he’s no longer mine. He took unkindly
 That I forbad him Cleopatra’s sight,
 Because I fear’d he lov’d her. “ He confess’d
 “ He had a warmth which for my sake he stifled;
 “ For ’twere impossible that two so one
 “ Should not have lov’d the same. When he departed
 “ He took no leave, and that confirm’d my thoughts.

“ *Vent.* It argues that he lov’d you more than her,
 “ Else he had staid ; but he perceiv’d you jealous, 120
 “ And would not grieve his friend. I know he loves you.

“ *Ant.* I should have seen him then ere now.

“ *Vent.* Perhaps

“ He has thus long been lab’ring for your peace.

“ *Ant.*” Would he were here !

Vent. Would you believe he lov’d you ?

I read your answer in your eyes you would.

Not to conceal it longer, he has sent

A messenger from Cæsar’s camp with letters.

Ant. Let him appear.

130

Vent. I’ll bring him instantly.

[*Exit Ventidius, and re-enters immediately with Dolabella.*

Ant. ’Tis he himself, himself ! by holy friendship !

[*Runs to embrace him.*

Art thou return’d at last, my better half !

Come, give me all myself !

“ Let me not live

“ If the young bridegroom longing for his night

“ Was ever half so fond !”

Dol. I must be silent, for my soul is busy
 About a nobler work. She’s new come home,
 Like a long-absent man, and wanders o’er
 Each room, a stranger to her own, to look
 If all be safe.

140

Ant. Thou hast what’s left of me,

“ For I am now so sunk from what I was

“ Thou find’st me at my lowest watermark :

“ The rivers that ran in and rais’d my fortunes

“ Are all dry’d up, or take another course :

“ What I have left is from my native spring ;

“ I ’ave still a heart that swells in scorn of Fate,

“ And lifts me to my banks.

150

“ *Dol.* Still you are lord of all the world to me.

“ *Ant.* Why, then I yet am so, for thou art all !

“ If I had any joy when thou wert absent

“ I grudg’d it to myself ; methought I robb’d

“ Thee of thy part.” But oh, my Dolabella !

Thou hast beheld me other than I am——

Hast thou not seen my morning chambers fill’d

With sceptred slaves who waited to salute me ?

With eastern monarchs, who forgot the sun

To worship my uprising : Menial kings

160

“ Ran coursing up and down my palace-yard,”

Stood silenc’d in my presence, watch’d my eyes,

And at my least command all started out

Like racers to the goal.

Dol. Slaves to your fortune.

Ant. Fortune is Cæsar’s now ; and what am I ?

Vent. What you have made yourself : I will not flatter.

Ant. Is this friendly done ?

Dol. Yes, when his end is so ; I must join with him,

Indeed I must, and yet you must not chide :

170

Why am I else your friend ?

Ant. Take heed, young man,

How thou upbraid’st my love ! The queen has eyes,

And thou too hast a soul ! Canst thou remember

When, swell’d with hatred, thou beheld’st her first

As accessory to thy brother’s death ?

Dol. Spare my remembrance ! ’twas a guilty day,

And still the blush hangs here.

Ant. To clear herself

For sending him no aid she came from Egypt,

180

Her galley down the silver Sydnos row’d,

The tackling silk, the streamers wav’d with gold,

The gentle winds were lodg'd in purple sails,
Her nymphs like Nereids round her couch were plac'd,
Where she another sea-born Venus lay.

Dol. No more! I would not hear it!

Ant. Oh, you must?

She lay, and leant her cheek upon her hand,
And cast a look so languishingly sweet,
As if secure of all beholders' hearts 190
Neglecting she could take 'em. Boys, like Cupids,
Stood fanning with their painted wings the winds
That play'd about her face; but if she smil'd,
A darting glory seem'd to blaze abroad,
That men's desiring eyes were never weary'd,
But hung upon the object! To soft flutes
The silver oars kept time, and while they play'd,
The hearing gave new pleasure to the sight,
And both to thought. 'Twas heav'n, or somewhat more!
For she so charm'd all hearts, that gazing crowds 200
Stood panting on the shore, and wanted breath
To give their welcome voice.
Then, Dolabella, where was then thy soul?
Was not thy fury quite disarm'd with wonder?
Didst thou not shrink behind me from those eyes,
And whisper in my ear, Oh, tell her not
That I accus'd her of my brother's death!

Dol. And should my weakness be a plea for yours?
Mine was an age when love might be excus'd,
"When kindly warmth, and when my springing youth 210
"Made it a debt to nature:" yours——

Vent. Speak boldly:

Yours, he would say, in your declining age,
"When no more heat was left but what you forc'd,
"When all the sap was needful for the trunk,
"When it went down, then they constrain'd the course,

“ And robb’d from Nature to supply desire.”
 In you (I would not use so harsh a word)
 ’Tis but plain dotage.

Ant. Ha !

220

Dol. ’Twas urg’d too home.
 But yet the loss was private that I made ;
 ’Twas but myself I lost : I lost no legions ;
 I had no world to lose, no peoples’ love.

Ant. This from a friend ?

Dol. Yes, Antony, a true one ;
 A friend so tender, that each word I speak
 Stabs my own heart before it reach your ear.
 Oh ! judge me not less kind because I chide.
 To Cæsar I excuse you.

230

Ant. Oh, ye Gods !

Have I then liv’d to be excus’d to Cæsar !

Dol. As to your equal.

Ant. Well, he’s but my equal :

While I wear this he never shall be more.

Dol. I bring conditions from him.

Ant. Are they noble ?

Methinks thou shouldst not bring ’em else ; yet he
 Is full of deep dissembling, knows no honour
 Divided from his int’rest. “ Fate mistook him,
 “ For nature meant him for an usurer :”
 He’s fit indeed to buy, not conquer kingdoms.

240

Vent. Then granting this,

What pow’r was theirs who wrought so hard a temper
 To honourable terms ?

Ant. It was my Dolebella, or some god.

Dol. Not I, nor yet Mecænas nor Agrippa ;
 They were your enemies, and I a friend
 Too weak alone ; yet ’twas a Roman deed.

Ant. ’Twas like a Roman done. Show me that man 250

Who has preserv'd my life, my love, my honour ;
Let me but see his face.

Vent. That task is mine,
And, Heav'n ! thou know'st how pleasing. [*Exit Vent.*

Dol. You'll remember
To whom you stand oblig'd ?

Ant. When I forget it
Be thou unkind, and that's my greatest curse.
My queen shall thank him too.

Dol. I fear she will not. 260

Ant. But she shall do't. The queen, my Dolabella !
Hast thou not still some grudgings of thy fever ?

Dol. I would not see her lost.

Ant. When I forsake her,
Leave me, my better stars, for she has truth
Beyond her beauty. Cæsar tempted her
At no less price than kingdoms to betray me ;
But she resisted all : and yet thou chid'st me
For loving her too well. Could I do so ?

Dol. Yes ; there's my reason. 270

*Re-enter VENTIDIUS with OCTAVIA, leading Antony's two
little Daughters.*

Ant. Where——Octavia there ! [*Starting back.*

Vent. What ! is she poison to you ? a disease ?
Look on her, view her well, and those she brings :
Are they all strangers to your eyes ? has Nature
No secret call, no whisper, they are yours ?

Dol. For shame, my lord ! if not for love, receive 'em
With kinder eyes. If you confess a man,
Meet 'em, embrace 'em, bid 'em welcome to you.
“ Your arms should open, ev'n without your knowledge,

“ To clasp ’em in ; your feet should turn to wings 280

“ To bear you to ’em ; and your eyes dart out,

“ And aim a kiss ere you could reach their lips.”

Ant. I stood amaz’d to think how they came hither.

Vent. I sent for ’em ; I brought them in unknown
To Cleopatra’s guards.

Dol. Yet are you cold ?

OÆ. Thus long have I attended for my welcome,
Which, as a stranger, sure I might expect.

Who am I ?

Ant. Cæsar’s sister.

290

OÆ. That’s unkind !

Had I been nothing more than Cæsar’s sister,
Know I had still remain’d in Cæsar’s camp ;
But your Octavia, your much injur’d wife,
Tho’ banish’d from your bed, driv’n from your house,
In spite of Cæsar’s sister still is yours.

’Tis true, I have a heart disdains your coldness,
And prompts me not to seek what you should offer ;
But a wife’s virtue still surmounts that pride :

I come to claim you as my own, to show

300

My duty first, to ask, nay beg, your kindness.

Your hand, my lord ; ’tis mine, and I will have it.

[*Taking his hand.*

Vent. Do take it, thou deserv’st it.

Dol. On my soul,

And so she does. “ She’s neither too submissive

“ Nor yet too haughty ; but so just a mean

“ Shows, as it ought, a wife and Roman too.”

Ant. I fear, Octavia, you have begg’d my life.

OÆ. Begg’d it, my lord !

Ant. Yes, begg’d it, my ambassadress ;
Poorly and basely begg’d it of your brother.

310

OÆ. Poorly and basely I could never beg,
Nor could my brother grant.

Ant. Shall I, who to my kneeling slave could say,
Rise up and be a king, shall I fall down
And cry, Forgive me, Cæsar? " Shall I set
" A man my equal in the place of Jove,
" As he could give me being?" No; that word
Forgive would choke me up,
And die upon my tongue.

320

Dol. You shall not need it.

Ant. I will not need it. Come, you 'ave all betray'd me—
" My friend too! to receive some vile conditions."
My wife has bought me with her pray'rs and tears,
And now I must become her branded slave:
In ev'ry peevish mood she will upbraid
The life she gave: if I but look awry,
She cries I'll tell my brother.

OÆ. My hard fortune
Subjects me still to your unkind mistakes:
But the conditions I have brought are such
You need not blush to take. I love your honour,
Because 'tis mine. It never shall be said
Octavia's husband was her brother's slave.
Sir, you are free, free ev'n from her you loathe;
For tho' my brother bargains for your love,
Makes me the price and cement of your peace,
I have a soul like yours; I cannot take
Your love as alms, nor beg what I deserve.

330

I'll tell my brother we are reconcil'd;
He shall draw back his troops, and you shall march
To rule the East. I may be dropt at Athens;
No matter where; I never will complain,
But only keep the barren name of wife,
And rid you of the trouble.

340

Vent. Was ever such a strife of sullen honour!
Both scorn to be oblig'd.

Dol. Oh, she has touch'd him in the tend'rest part:
See how he reddens with despite and shame
To be outdone in generosity!

350

“*Vent.* See how he winks! how he dries up a tear
“ That fain would fall!”

Ant. Octavia, I have heard you, and must praise
The greatness of your soul,
But cannot yield to what you have propos'd;
For I can ne'er be conquer'd but by love,
And you do all for duty. You would free me,
And would be dropt at Athens; was't not so?

Oct. It was, my lord.

Ant. Then I must be oblig'd
To one who loves me not, who to herself
May call me thankless and ungrateful man.
I'll not endure it; no.

360

Vent. I'm glad it pinches there.

Oct. Would you triumph o'er poor Octavia's virtue?
That pride was all I had to bear me up,
That you might think you ow'd me for your life,
And ow'd it to my duty, not my love,
“ I have been injur'd, and my haughty soul
“ Could brook but ill the man who slights my bed.”

370

Ant. Therefore, you love me not.

Oct. Therefore, my lord,
I should not love you.

Ant. Therefore you would leave me.

Oct. And therefore I should leave you—if I could.

Dol. Her soul's too great, after such injuries,
To say she loves, and yet she let's you see it.
Her modesty and silence plead her cause.

Ant. Oh, Dolabella! which way shall I turn?

I find a secret yielding in my soul;
But Cleopatra, who would die with me,
Must she be left? Pity pleads for Octavia,
But does it not plead more for Cleopatra?

380

Vent. Justice and pity both plead for Octavia,
For Cleopatra neither.

One would be ruin'd with you, but she first
Had ruin'd you: the other you have ruin'd,
And yet she would preserve you.

In ev'ry thing their merits are unequal.

Ant. Oh, my distracted soul!

390

Oct. Sweet Heav'n! compose it.

Come, come, my lord, if I can pardon you,
Methinks you should accept it. Look on these;
Are they not yours? or stand they thus neglected
As they are mine? Go to him, children, go,
Kneel to him, take him by the hand, speak to him,
"For you may speak, and he may own you too
"Without a blush; and so he cannot all
"His children. Go, I say, and pull him to me,
"And pull him to yourselves, from that bad woman:" 400
You, Agrippina, hang upon his arms,
And you, Antonia, clasp about his waist:
If he will shake you off, if he will dash you
Against the pavement, you must bear it, children,
For you are mine, and I was born to suffer.

[*Here the Children go to him, &c.*

Vent. Was ever sight so moving! Emperor!

Dol. Friend!

Oct. Husband!

Both Child. Father!

Ant. I am vanquish'd: take me, 410
Octavia; take me, children; share me all. [*Embracing them.*
I've been a thriftless debtor to your loves,

And run out much in riot from your stock ;
But all shall be amended.

Oct. Oh, blest hour !

Dol. Oh, happy change !

Vent. My joy stops at my tongue !

“ But it has found two channels here for one,

“ And bubbles out above.”

Ant. [*To Oct.*] This is thy triumph : lead me where thou
wilt, 420

Ev’n to thy brother’s camp.

Oct. All there are yours.

Enter ALEXAS hastily.

Alex. The queen, my mistress, sir, and yours——

Ant. ’Tis past. Octavia, you shall stay this night ;
To-morrow Cæsar and we are one.

[*Exit, leading Oct. Dol. and the Children follow.*]

Vent. There’s news for you ! Run, my officious eunuch ;
Be sure to be the first ; haste forward ;

Haste, my dear eunuch, haste ! [*Exit.*]

“ *Alex.* This downright fighting fool, this thick-scull’d
hero,

“ This blunt unthinking instrument of death, 430

“ With plain dull virtue has outgone my wit.

“ Pleasure forsook my earliest infancy ;

“ The luxury of others robb’d my cradle,

“ And ravish’d thence the promise of a man ;

“ Cast out from Nature, disinherited

“ Of what her meanest children claim by kind,

“ Yet greatness kept me from contempt : that’s gone.

“ Had Cleopatra follow’d my advice,

“ Then he had been betray’d who now forsakes :

“ She dies for love ; but she has known its joys. 440

" Gods! is this just, that I, who know no joys,
" Must die because she loves?

" *Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, IRAS, and train.*

" Oh, madam! I have seen what blasts my eyes;

" Octavia's here!

" *Cleo.* Peace with that raven's note!

" I know it too, and now am in

" The pangs of death.

" *Alex.* You are no more a queen;

" Egypt is lost.

" *Cleo.* What tell'st thou me of Egypt!

450

" My life, my soul is lost! Octavia has him!

" Oh, fatal name to Cleopatra's love!

" My kisses, my embraces, now are hers,

" While I——But thou hast seen my rival; speak,

" Does she deserve this blessing? is she fair?

" Bright as a goddess? and is all perfection

" Confin'd to her? It is. Poor I was made

" Of that coarse matter which, when she was finish'd,

" The gods threw by for rubbish.

" *Alex.* She is indeed a very miracle.

460

" *Cleo.* Death to my hopes, a miracle!

" *Alex.* A miracle——

[*Bowing.*

" I mean of goodness: for in beauty, madam,

" You make all wonder cease.

" *Cleo.* I was too rash:

" Take this in part of recompence. But, oh!

" I fear thou flatterest me.

[*Giving a Ring.*

" *Char.* She comes! she's here!

" *Irás.* Fly, madam, Cæsar's sister!

" *Cleo.* Were she the sister of the thund'rer, Jove, 470

“ And bore her brother’s lightning in her eyes,
 “ Thus would I face my rival.”

*Enter OCTAVIA with VENTIDIUS. OCTAVIA bears up to
 CLEOPATRA.*

OÆ. I need not ask if you are Cleopatra,
 Your haughty carriage——

“ *Cleo.* Shows I am a queen.

“ Nor need I ask who you are.

“ *OÆ.* A Roman ;

“ A name that makes and can unmake a queen.

“ *Cleo.* Your lord, the man who serves me, is a Roman.

“ *OÆ.* He was a Roman till he lost that name 480

“ To be a slave in Egypt ; but I come

“ To free him hence.

“ *Cleo.* Peace, peace, my lover’s Juno.

“ When he grew weary of that household clog

“ He chose my easier bonds.

“ *OÆ.* I wonder not

“ Your bonds are easy ; you have long been practis’d

“ In that lascivious art. He’s not the first

“ For whom you spread your snares, let Cæsar witness.

“ *Cleo.* I lov’d not Cæsar ; ’twas but gratitude 490

“ I paid his love : the worst your malice can

“ Is but to say the greatest of mankind

“ Has been my slave. The next, but far above him

“ In my esteem, is he whom law calls yours,

“ But whom his love made mine.

“ *OÆ.* I would view nearer [Coming up close to her.

“ That face which has so long usurp’d my right,

“ To find th’ inevitable charms that catch

“ Mankind so sure, that ruin’d my dear lord.

- “ *Cleo.* Oh, you do well to search; for had you known 500
 “ But half these charms, you had not lost his heart.
 “ *Oct.* Far be their knowledge from a Roman lady,
 “ Far from a modest wife. Shame of our sex!
 “ Dost thou not blush to own those black endearments
 “ That make sin pleasing?
 “ *Cleo.* You may blush you want em.
 “ If bounteous Nature, if indulgent Heaven,
 “ Have given me charms to please the bravest man,
 “ Should I not thank ’em? Should I be asham’d,
 “ And not be proud? I am that he has lov’d me; 510
 “ And when I love not him, Heav’n change this face
 “ For one like that.
 “ *Oct.* Thou lov’st him not so well.
 “ *Cleo.* I love him better, and deserve him more.
 “ *Oct.* You do not, cannot: you have been his ruin.
 “ Who made him cheap at Rome but Cleopatra?
 “ Who made him scorn’d abroad but Cleopatra?
 “ At Actium who betray’d him? Cleopatra.
 “ Who made his children orphans, and poor me
 “ A wretched widow? only Cleopatra. 520
 “ *Cleo.* Yet she who loves him best is Cleopatra.
 “ If you have suffer’d, I have suffer’d more.
 “ You bear the specious title of a wife
 “ To gild your cause, and draw the pitying world
 “ To favour it: the world contemns poor me,
 “ For I have lost my honour, lost my fame,
 “ And stain’d the glory of my royal house,
 “ And all to bear the branded name of Mistress.
 “ There wants but life, and that too I would lose,
 “ For him I love. 530
 “ *Oct.* Be it so then; take thy wish. [*Exit cum suis.*
 “ *Cleo.* And ’tis my wish,

- " Now he is lost for whom alone I liv'd.
 " My sight grows dim and ev'ry object dances
 " And swims before me in the maze of death:
 " My spirits while they were oppos'd kept up:
 " They could not sink beneath a rival's scorn:
 " But now she's gone they faint.
 " *Alex.* Mine have had leisure
 " To recollect their strength, and furnish counsel 540
 " To ruin her who else must ruin you.
 " *Cleo.* Vain promiser!
 " Lead me, my Charmion; nay, your hand too, Iras;
 " My grief has weight enough to sink you both.
 " Conduct me to some solitary chamber,
 " And draw the curtains round,
 " Then leave me to myself to take alone
 " My fill of grief:
 " There I till death will his unkindness weep,
 " As harmless infants mourn themselves asleep." [Exeunt.

ACT IV. SCENE I.

A Saloon. Enter ANTONY and DOLABELLA.

Dolabella.

WHY would you shift it from yourself on me?
 Can you not tell her you must part?

Ant. I cannot;

I could pull out an eye and bid it go,
 And t' other should not weep. Oh, Dolabella!
 How many deaths are in this word Depart!
 I dare not trust my tongue to sell her so;
 One look of hers would thaw me into tears,
 And I should melt till I were lost again.

Dol. Then let Ventidius ;
He's rough by nature.

10

Ant. Oh, he'll speak too harshly ;
He'll kill her with the news ; thou, only thou.

Dol. Nature has cast me in so soft a mould,
That, " but to hear a story feign'd for pleasure,
" Of some sad lover's death moistens my eyes,
" And robs me of my manhood."—I should speak
So faintly, with such fear to grieve her heart,
She'd not believe it earnest.

Ant. Therefore, therefore
Thou, only thou, art fit. Think thyself me,
And when thou speak'st (but let it first be long)
Take off the edge from ev'ry sharper sound,
And let our parting be as gently made
As other loves begin. Wilt thou do this ?

20

Dol. What you have said so sinks into my soul,
That if I must speak, I shall speak just so.

Ant. I leave you then to your sad task. Farewell !
I sent her word to meet you. [*Goes to the door, and comes back.*
I forgot :

30

Let her be told I'll make her peace with mine :
Her crown and dignity shall be preserv'd,
If I have pow'r with Cæsar—Oh ! be sure
To think on that.

Dol. Fear not, I will remember.

[*Antony goes again to the door, and comes back.*

Ant. And tell her too, how much I was constrain'd ;
I did not this but with extremest force.
Desire her not to hate my memory,
For I'll still cherish hers—insist on that.

Dol. Trust me, I'll not forget it.

40

Ant. Then that's all.

[*Goes out and returns again.*

Wilt thou forgive my fondness this once more?
 Tell her, tho' we shall never meet again,
 If I should hear she took another love,
 The news would break my heart—Now I must go,
 For ev'ry time I have return'd I feel
 My soul more tender, and my next command
 Would be to bid her stay, and ruin both.

[Exit.

Dol. Men are but children of a larger growth,
 Our appetites as apt to change as theirs,
 And full as craving too, and full as vain;
 And yet the soul shut up in her dark room,
 Viewing so clear abroad, at home sees nothing,
 But like a mole in earth, busy and blind,
 Works all her folly up, and casts it outward
 To the world's open view. Thus I discover'd,
 And blam'd the love of ruin'd Antony,
 Yet wish that I were he to be so ruin'd.

50

Enter VENTIDIUS above.

Vent. Alone, and talking to himself! Concern'd too!
 Perhaps my guess is right: he lov'd her once,
 And may pursue it still.

60

Dol. Oh, friendship! friendship!
 Ill canst thou answer this, and reason worse:
 Unfaithful in th' attempt, hopeless to win,
 And if I win undone. Mere madness all.
 And yet th' occasion fair. What injury
 To him to wear the robe which he throws by?

Vent. None, none at all. This happens as I wish,
 To ruin her yet more with Antony.

[Aside.

*Enter CLEOPATRA, talking with ALEXAS, CHARMION, IRAS,
on the other side.*

Dol. She comes ! what charms has sorrow on that face !
Sorrow seems pleas'd to dwell with so much sweetness ; 71
Yet now and then a melancholy smile
Breaks loose, like lightning in a winter's night,
And shows a moment's day.

Vent. If she should love him too ! Her eunuch there !
That porc'pisse bodes ill weather. Draw, draw nearer,
Sweet devil ! that I may hear.

Alex. Believe me ; try

*[Dolabella goes over to Charmion and Iras, seems to talk
with them.]*

To make him jealous ; jealousy is like
" A polish'd glass held to the lips when life's in doubt : 80
If there be breath 'twill catch the lamp and show it.

Cleo. I grant you jealousy's a proof of love,
But 'tis a weak and unavailing medicine ;
" It puts out the disease, and makes it show,
" But has no pow'r to cure."

Alex. 'Tis your last remedy, and strongest too :
And then this Dolabella, who so fit
To practise on ? He's handsome, valiant, young,
And looks as he were laid for Nature's bait
To catch weak women's eyes. 90

He stands already more than half suspected
Of loving you : the least kind word or glance
You give this youth will kindle him with love ;
Then, like a burning vessel set adrift,
You'll send him down amain before the wind
To fire the heart of jealous Antony.

Cleo. Can I do this ? ah, no ! my love's so true,

That I can neither hide it where it is,
 Nor show it where it is not. "Nature meant me
 " A wife, a silly, harmless, household dove,
 " Fond without art, and kind without deceit;
 " But Fortune, that has made a mistress of me,
 " Has thrust me out to the wide world, unfurnish'd
 " Of falsehood to be happy."

100

Alex. Force yourself:

Th'event will be, your lover will return
 Doubly desirous to possess the good
 Which once he fear'd to lose.

Cleo. I must attempt it;

But oh, with what regret!

110

[*Exit Alex. She comes up to Dolabella.*]

Vent. So now the scene draws near; they're in my reach.

Cleo. [*To Dol.*] Discoursing with my women! Might not I
 Share in your entertainment?

Char. You have been

The subject of it, madam.

Cleo. How! and how?

Iras. Such praises of your beauty!

Cleo. Mere poetry:

Your Roman wits, your Gallus and Tibullus,
 Have taught you this from Cytheris and Delia.

120

Dol. Those Roman wits have never been in Egypt,
 Cytheris and Delia else had been unsung:
 I who have seen——had I been born a poet,
 Should choose a nobler name.

Cleo. You flatter me;

But 'tis your nation's vice: all of your country
 Are flatt'ers, and all false. Your friend's like you:
 I'm sure he sent you not to speak these words.

Dol. No, madam; yet he sent me——

Cleo. Well, he sent you——

130

Dol. Of a less pleasing errand.

Cleo. How less pleasing?

Less to yourself or me?

Dol. Madam, to both;

For you must mourn, and I must grieve to cause it.

Cleo. You, Charmion, and your fellow, stand at distance.

Hold up, my spirits! [*Aside.*]——Well, now your mournful matter,

For I'm prepar'd, perhaps can guess it too.

Dol. I wish you would, for 'tis a thankless office

To tell ill news; and I of all your sex

140

Most fear displeasing you.

Cleo. Of all your sex

I soonest could forgive you if you should.

Vent. Most delicate advances! Woman! woman!

Dear, damn'd unconstant sex!

Cleo. In the first place,

I am to be forsaken; is't not so?

Dol. I wish I could not answer to that question.

Cleo. Then pass it o'er because it troubles you;

“I should have been more griev'd another time.”

150

Next, I'm to lose my kingdom——Farewell Egypt!

Yet is there any more?

Dol. Madam, I fear

Your too deep sense of grief has turn'd your reason.

Cleo. No, no, I'm not run mad; I can bear fortune:

And love may be expell'd by other love,

As poisons are by poisons.

Dol. ——You overjoy me, madam,

To find your griefs so moderately borne.

You've had the worst: all are not false like him.

160

Cleo. No, Heav'n forbid they should!

Dol. Some men are constant.

Cleo. And constancy deserves reward, that's certain.

Dol. Deserves it not, but give it leave to hope.

Vent. I'll swear thou hast my leave. I have enough :

“ But how to manage this ! Well, I'll consider.” [Exit.

Dol. I came prepar'd

To tell you heavy news, news which I thought
Would fright the blood from your pale cheeks to hear ;
But you have met it with a cheerfulness 170
That makes my task more easy ; and my tongue,
Which on another's message was employ'd,
Would gladly speak its own.

Cleo. Hold, Dolabella.

First tell me, were you chosen by my lord,
Or sought you this employment ?

Dol. He pick'd me out, and, as his bosom-friend,
He charg'd me with his words.

Cleo. The message then

I know was tender, and each accent smooth, 180
To mollify that rugged word Depart.

Dol. Oh ! you mistake : he chose the harshest words :
“ With fiery eyes, and with contracted brows,”
He coin'd his face in the severest stamp,
And fury shook his fabric like an earthquake :
He heav'd for vent, and burst like bellowing Ætna,
In sounds scarce human, “ Hence, away for ever !
“ Let her begone, the blot of my renown,
“ And bane of all my hopes :

[All the time of this speech Cleopatra seems more and more
concerned, till she sinks quite down.

“ Let her be driv'n as far as men can think 190
“ From man's commerce : she'll poison to the centre.”

Cleo. Oh, I can bear no more ! [Faints.

Dol. Help, help ! Oh wretch ! oh cursed, cursed wretch !
What have I done ?

“ *Char.* Help, chafe her temples, *Iras.*

“ *Iras.* Bend, bend her forward quickly.”

Char. Heav’n be prais’d,
She comes again !

Cleo. “ Oh, let him not reproach me !”

Why have you brought me back to this loath’d being, 200

Th’ abode of falsehood, violated vows,

And injur’d love ? For pity let me go ;

For if there be a place of long repose,

I’m sure I want it. “ My disdainful lord

“ Can never break that quiet, nor awake

“ The sleeping soul with hollowing in my tomb

“ Such words as fright her hence.” Unkind ! unkind !

Dol. Believe me, ’tis against myself I speak ; [*Kneeling.*

That sure deserves belief. I injur’d him ;

My friend ne’er spoke those words. Oh, had you seen 210

How often he came back, and ev’ry time

With something more obliging and more kind

To add to what he said ; what dear farewells,

How almost vanish’d by his love he parted,

And lean’d to what unwillingly he left :

I, traitor as I was, for love of you,

(But what can you not do who made me false !)

I forg’d that lie, for whose forgiveness kneels

This self-accus’d, self-punish’d criminal.

Cleo. With how much ease believe we what we wish ! 220

Rise, Dolabella ; if you have been guilty,

I have contributed, and too much love

Has made me guilty too.

Th’ advance of kindness which I made was feign’d

To call back fleeting love by jealousy ;

But 'twould not last. Oh ! rather let me lose,
Than so ignobly trifle with his heart.

Dol. I find your breast fenc'd round from human reach,
Transparent as a rock of solid crystal,
Seen thro' but never pierc'd. " My friend, my friend ! 230
" What endless treasure hast thou thrown away,
" And scatter'd, like an infant, in the ocean
" Vain sums of wealth which none can gather thence !"

Cleo. Could you not beg
An hour's admittance to his private ear ?
" Like one who wanders thro' long barren wilds,
" And yet foreknows no hospitable inn
" Is near to succour hunger,
" Eats his fill before his painful march,
" So would I feed a while my famish'd eyes" 240
Before we part, for I have far to go,
If death be far, and never must return.

VENTIDIUS, *with* OCTAVIA *behind.*

Vent. From whence you may discover—Oh, sweet, sweet !
Would you indeed ! the pretty hand in earnest ?

Dol. I will for this reward ; [Takes her hand.
—Draw it not back ;
'Tis all I e'er will beg.

Vent. They turn upon us.

" *Oct.* What quick eyes has guilt !"

Vent. Seem not to have observ'd 'em, and go on. 250

They enter.

Dol. Saw you the emperor, Ventidius ?

Vent. No ;

I sought him, but I heard that he was private,
None with him but Hipparchus, his freed man.

Dol. Know you his bus'ness?

Vent. Giving him instructions
And letters to his brother Cæsar.

Dol. Well,

He must be found. *[Exeunt Dolabella and Cleopatra.]*

Oct. Most glorious impudence! 260

Vent. She look'd, methought,
As she would say, Take your old man, Octavia;
Thank you, I'm better here.

Well, but what use
Make we of this discovery?

Oct. Let it die.

Vent. I pity Dolabella! but she's dangerous;
" Her eyes have pow'r beyond Thessalian charms
" To draw the moon from heav'n; for eloquence
" The sea-green Sirens taught her voice their flatt'ry; 270
" And while she speaks night steals upon the day
" Unmark'd of those that hear; then she's so charming
" Age buds at sight of her, and swells to youth:
" The holy priests gaze on her when she smiles,
" And with heav'd hands, forgetting gravity,
" They bless her wanton eyes: ev'n I, who hate her,
" With a malignant joy behold such beauty."

And, " while I curse desire it." Antony
Must needs have some remains of passion still,
Which may ferment into a worse relapse 280

If now not fully cur'd———*But see he comes*———

" I know this minute

" With Cæsar he's endeavouring her peace.

Oct. You have prevail'd——but for a farther purpose
[Walks off.]

" I'll prove how he will relish this discovery.

" What, make a strumpet's peace! it swells my heart:

" It must not, shall not be.

“ *Vent.* His guards appear.
“ Let me begin, and you shall second me.”

Enter ANTONY.

Ant. Octavia, I was looking you, my love. 290
What, are your letters ready? I have giv’n
My last instructions.

Oct. Mine, my lord, are written.

Ant. Ventidius! [*Drawing him aside.*]

Vent. My lord?

Ant. A word in private.

When saw you Dolabella?

Vent. Now my lord

He parted hence, and Cleopatra with him.

Ant. Speak softly; ’twas by my command he went 300
To bear my last farewell.

Vent. It look’d indeed [*Aloud.*]
Like your farewell.

Ant. More softly—My farewell!
What secret meaning have you in those words
Of my farewell? He did it by my order.

Vent. Then he obey’d your order, I suppose. [*Aloud.*]
You bid him do it with all gentleness,
All kindness, and all—love.

Ant. How she mourn’d! 310
The poor forsaken creature!

Vent. She took it as she ought; she bore your parting,
As she did Cæsar’s, as she would another’s,
Were a new love to come.

Ant. Thou dost belie her, [*Aloud.*]
Most basely and maliciously belie her.

Vent. I thought not to displease you: I have done.

Oct. You seem disturb’d, my lord. [*Coming up.*]

Ant. A very trifle.

Retire, my love.

320

Vent. It was indeed a trifle.

He sent——

Ant. No more. Look how thou disobey'st me ;

Thy life shall answer it.

[*Angrily.*

OÆ. Then 'tis no trifle.

Vent. [*To OÆ.*] 'Tis less ; a-very nothing : you too saw it
As well as I, and therefore 'tis no secret.

Ant. She saw it !

Vent. Yes ; she saw young Dolabella—

Ant. Young Dolabella !

330

Vent. Young ? I think him young

And handsome too ; and so do others think him.

But what of that ? he went by your command,

Indeed, 'tis probable, with some kind message,

For she receiv'd it graciously : she smil'd ;

And then he grew familiar with her hand,

Squeez'd it, and worry'd it with rav'nous kisses ;

She blush'd, and sigh'd, and smil'd, and blush'd again ;

At last she took occasion to talk softly,

“ And brought her cheek up close, and lean'd on his, 340

“ At which he whisper'd kisses back on hers ;”

And then she cry'd aloud, That constancy

Should be rewarded.—This I saw and heard.

Ant. What woman was it whom you heard and saw

So playful with my friend ?

Not Cleopatra ?

Vent. Ev'n she, my lord !

Ant. My Cleopatra !

Vent. Your Cleopatra,

Dolabella's Cleopatra,

350

Every man's Cleopatra.

Ant. 'Tis false.

Vent. I do not lie, my lord.

"Is this so strange? should mistresses be left

"And not provide against a time of change?

"You know she's not much us'd to lonely nights.

Ant. I'll think no more on't."

I know 'tis false, and see the plot betwixt you.

"You needed not have gone this way, Octavia;

"What harms it you that Cleopatra's just?

360

"She's mine no more. I see and I forgive;

"Urge it no farther, love.

Oct. Are you concern'd

"That she's found false?

Ant. I should be were it so;

"For tho' tis past I would not that the world

"Should tax my former choice; that I lov'd one

"Of so light note; but I forgive you both."

Vent. What, has my age deserv'd that you should think
I would abuse your ears with perjury?

370

If Heav'n be true she's false.

Ant. Tho' heav'n and earth
Should witness it, I'll not believe her tainted.

Vent. I'll bring you then a witness
From hell to prove her so. Nay, go not back,

[*Seeing Alexas just entering and starting back.*

For stay you must and shall.

Alex. What means my lord?

Vent. To make you do what most you hate, speak truth.

"You are of Cleopatra's private counsel,

"Of her bed counsel, her lascivious hours,

380

"Are conscious of each nightly change she makes,

"And watch her as Chaldeans do the moon,

"Can tell what signs she passes thro' what day."

Alex. My noble lord.

Vent. My most illustrious pander !

No fine set speech, no cadence, no turn'd periods,
But a plain homespun truth, is what I ask :
I did myself o'erhear your queen make love
To Dolabella : speak, for I will know
By your confession what more pass'd betwixt 'em,
How near the bus'ness draws to your employment,
And when the happy hour.

390

Ant. Speak truth, Alexas ; whether it offend
Or please Ventidius, care not. Justify
Thy injur'd queen from malice : dare his worst.

" *Oct.* [*Aside.*] See how he give him courage, how he fears
" To find her false, and shuts his eyes to truth,
" Willing to be misled !"

Alex. As far as love may plead for woman's frailty,
Urg'd by desert and greatness of the lover,
So far (divine Octavia) may my queen
Stand ev'n excus'd to you for loving him
Who is your lord ; so far from brave Ventidius.
May her past actions hope a fair report.

400

Ant. 'Tis well and truly spoken : Mark, Ventidius.

Alex. To you, most noble emperor, her strong passion
Stands not excus'd, but wholly justify'd.
Her beauty's charms alone, without her crown,
From Ind and Meroe drew the distant vows
Of sighing kings, and at her feet were laid
The sceptres of the earth, expos'd on heaps,
To choose where she would reign ;
She thought a Roman only could deserve her,
And, of all Romans, only Antony ;
And to be less than wife to you disdain'd
Their lawful passion.

410

Ant. 'Tis but truth.

Alex. And yet tho' love and your unmatch'd desert
Have drawn her from the due regard of honour,
At last Heav'n open'd her unwilling eyes 420
To see the wrongs she offer'd fair Octavia,
Whose holy bed she lawlessly usurp'd :
The sad effects of this improsp'rous war
Confirm'd those pious thoughts.

Vent. [*Aside.*] Oh, wheel you there ?
Observe him now ; the man begins to mend,
And talk substantial reason. Fear not, eunuch,
The emperor has giv'n thee leave to speak.

Alex. Else had I never dared t' offend his ears
With what the last necessity has urg'd 430
On my forsaken mistress ; yet I must not
Presume to say her heart is wholly alter'd.

Ant. No, dare not for thy life, I charge thee, dare not
Pronounce that fatal word.

Oct. Must I bear this ? Good Heav'n ! afford me patience.
[*Aside.*

Vent. Oh, sweet eunuch ! my dear half man ! proceed.

Alex. Yet Dolabella

Has lov'd her long ; he, next my godlike lord,
Deserves her best ; and should she meet his passion,
Rejected as she is by him she lov'd—— 440

Ant. Hence from my sight, for I can bear no more !
Let furies drag thee quick to hell ! each torturing hand
Do thou employ till Cleopatra comes,
Then join thou too, and help to torture her.

[*Exit Alexas, thrust out by Antony.*

Oct. 'Tis not well
Indeed, my lord, 'tis much unkind to me,
To shew this passion, this extreme concernment
For an abandon'd, faithless prostitute.

Ant. Octavia, leave me! I am much disorder'd!
Leave me, I say!

450

Oa. My lord!

Ant. I bid you leave me.

" *Vent.* Obey him, madam; best withdraw awhile,
" And see how this will work.

" *Oa.* Wherein have I offended you, my lord,
" That I am bid to leave you? am I false
" Or infamous? am I a Cleopatra?
" Were I she,

" Base as she is, you would not bid me leave you,
" But hang upon my neck, take slight excuses,
" And fawn upon my falsehood.

460

" *Ant.* 'Tis too much,
" Too much, Octavia! I am prest with sorrows
" Too heavy to be borne, and you add more!
" I would retire, and recollect what's left
" Of man within to aid me.

" *Oa.* You would mourn
" In private for your love who has betray'd you.
" You did but half return to me; your kindness
" Linger'd behind with her. I hear, my lord,
" You make conditions for her,
" And would include her treaty: wondrous proofs
" Of love to me!

470

" *Ant.* Are you my friend, Ventidius?
" Or are you turn'd a Dolabella too,
" And let this fury loose?

" *Vent.* Oh, be advis'd,
" Sweet madam! and retire."

Oa. Yes, I will go, but never to return;
" You shall no more be haunted with this fury."
My lord, my lord! love will not always last

480

When urg'd with long unkindness and disdain.
 Take her again whom you prefer to me;
 She stays but to be call'd. Poor cozen'd man!
 Let a feign'd parting give her back your heart,
 Which a feign'd love first got; for injur'd me,
 Tho' my just sense of wrongs forbid my stay,
 My duty shall be yours.

To the dear pledges of our former love
 My tenderness and care shall be transferr'd, 490
 And they shall cheer by turns my widow'd nights.
 So take my last farewell! for I despair
 To have you whole, and scorn to take you half. [Exit.

Vent. I combat Heav'n, which blasts my best designs!
 My last attempt must be to win her back;
 But oh! I fear in vain. [Exit.

Ant. Why was I fram'd with this plain honest heart
 Which knows not to disguise its griefs and weakness,
 But bears its workings outward to the world?
 I should have kept the mighty anguish in, 500
 And forc'd a smile at Cleopatra's falsehood;
 Octavia had believ'd it, and had staid.
 But I am made a shallow-forded stream,
 Seen to the bottom, all my clearness scorn'd,
 And all my faults expos'd.—See, where he comes.

Enter DOLABELLA.

Who has profan'd the sacred name of friend,
 And worn it into vileness!
 With how secure a brow and specious form
 He gilds the secret villain! Sure that face
 Was meant for honesty, but Heav'n mismatch'd it, 510
 And furnish'd treason out with nature's pomp
 To make its work more easy.

Dol. O, my friend !”

Ant. Well, Dolabella, you perform’d my message ?

Dol. I did unwillingly.

Ant. Unwillingly !

Was it so hard for you to bear our parting ?

You should have wish’d it.

Dol. Why ?

Ant. Because you love me ;

520

And she receiv’d my message with as true,

With as unfeign’d a sorrow as you brought it ?

Dol. She loves you ev’n to madness.

Ant. Oh ! I know it.

You, Dolabella, do not better know

How much she loves me. And should I

Forsake this beauty, this all-perfect creature ?

Dol. I could not, were she mine.

Ant. And yet you first

Persuaded me. How came you alter’d since ?

530

Dol. I said at first I was not fit to go :

I could not hear her sighs, and see her tears,

But pity must prevail ; and so perhaps

It may again with you ; for I have promis’d

That she should take her last farewell ; and see,

She comes to claim my word.

Enter CLEOPATRA.

Ant. False Dolabella !

Dol. What’s false, my lord ?

Ant. Why, Dolabella’s false,

And Cleopatra’s false ; both false and faithless.

540

Draw near, you well-join’d wickedness, you serpents,

Whom I have in my kindly bosom warm’d

Till I am stung to death.”

4

Dol. My lord, have I
Deserv'd to be thus us'd?

Cleo. Can Heav'n prepare
A newer torment? can it find a curse
Beyond our separation?

Ant. Yes, if fate
Be just, much greater: "Heav'n should be ingenious 550
" In punishing such crimes. The rolling stone
" And gnawing vulture were slight pains, invented
" When Jove was young, and no examples known
" Of mighty ills; but you have ripen'd sin
" To such a monstrous growth, 'twill pose the gods
" To find an equal torture." Two, two such!
O, there's no farther name; two such—to me,
To me, who lock'd my soul within your breasts,
Had no desires, no joys, no life, but you;
" When half the globe was mine, I gave it you 560
" In dowry with my heart: I had no use,
" No fruit, of all but you:" a friend and mistress
Was what the world could give. O, Cleopatra!
Oh, Dolabella! how could you betray
This tender heart, which, with an infant fondness,
Lay lull'd betwixt your bosoms, and there slept
Secure of injur'd faith?

Dol. If she has wrong'd you,
Heav'n, hell, and you, revenge it.

Ant. If she has wrong'd me? 570
" Thou wouldst evade thy part of guilt: but swear
" Thou lov'st not her.
" *Dol.* Not so as I love you.
" *Ant.* Not so! Swear, swear, I say, thou dost not love
her,
" *Del.* No more than friendship will allow."

Ant. "No more!

"Friendship allows thee nothing: thou art perjur'd—

"And yet thou didst not swear thou lov'st her not:

"But not so much, no more. Oh, trifling hypocrite!

"Who durst not own to her thou dost not love, 580

"Nor own to me thou dost!" Ventidius heard it;

Octavia saw it.

Cleo. They are enemies.

Ant. Alexas is not so; he, he confest it;

He, who next hell best knew it, he avow'd it.

Why do I seek for proof beyond yourself?

[To Dol.]

You, whom I sent to bear my last farewell,

Return'd to plead her stay.

Dol. What shall I answer?

If to have lov'd be guilt, then I have sinn'd;

590

But if to have repented of that love

Can wash away my crime, I have repented;

Yet if I have offended past forgiveness

Let her not suffer: she is innocent.

"*Cleo.* Ah, what will not a woman do who loves!

"What means will she refuse to keep that heart

"Where all her joys are plac'd! 'Twas I encourag'd,

"'Twas I blew up the fire that scorch'd his soul,

"To make you jealous, and by that regain you:

"But all in vain; I could not counterfeit:

600

"In spite of all the dams, my love broke o'er,

"And drown'd my heart again: Fate took th' occasion,

"And thus one minute's feigning has destroy'd

"My whole life's truth."

Ant. Thin cobweb arts of falsehood,

Seen and broke thro' at first.

Dol. Forgive your mistress.

Cleo. Forgive your friend.

" *Ant.* You have convinc'd yourselves ;
" You plead each other's cause. What witness have you 610
" That you but meant to raise my jealousy ?

" *Cleo.* Ourselves and Heav'n."

Ant. Guilt witnesses for guilt ! Hence love and friendship !
" You have no longer place in human breasts ;
" These two have driv'n you out : avoid my sight ;
" I would not kill the man whom I have lov'd,
" And cannot hurt the woman ; but avoid me ;
" I do not know how long I can be tame ;
" For if I stay one minute more to think
" How I am wrong'd, my justice and revenge 620
" Will cry so loud within me, that my pity
" Will not be heard for either.

" *Dol.* Heav'n has but
" Our sorrow for our sins, and then delights
" To pardon erring man ; sweet mercy seems
" Its darling attribute, which limits justice,
" As if there were degrees in infinite,
" And infinite would rather want perfection
" Than punish to extent."

Ant. I can forgive 630
A foe, but not a mistress and a friend :
Treason is there in its most horrid shape
Where trust is greatest ; " and the soul resign'd
" Is stabb'd by its own guards." I'll hear no more :
Hence from my sight for ever.

Cleo. How ? for ever !
I cannot go one moment from your sight,
And must I go for ever ?
My joys, my only joys, are centred here :
What place have I to go to ? my own kingdom ? 640
That I have lost for you ; or to the Romans ?

They hate me for your sake : or must I wander
The wide world o'er a helpless banish'd woman,
Banish'd for love of you, banish'd from you ;
Ay, there's the banishment ! Oh, hear me, hear me,
With strictest justice, for I beg no favour,
And if I have offended you then kill me,
But do not banish me.

Ant. I must not hear you ;
I have a fool within me takes your part, 650
But honour stops my ears.

Cleo. For pity hear me !
“ Would you cast off a slave who follow'd you,
“ Who crouch'd beneath your spurn ?—He has no pity !
“ See if he gives one tear to my departure,
“ One look, one kind farewell : oh, iron heart !
“ Let all the gods look down and judge betwixt us
“ If he did ever love !

“ *Ant.* No more. Alexas !

“ *Dol.* A perjur'd villain !” 660

Ant. [*To Cleo.*] Your Alexas ! yours !

“ *Cleo.* Oh, 'twas his plot ; his ruinous design
“ T'engage you in my love by jealousy.
“ Hear him ; confront him with me ; let him speak.

“ *Ant.* I have, I have.

“ *Cleo.* And if he clear me not——”

Ant. “ Your creature ! one who hangs upon your smiles,
“ Watches your eye, to say or to unsay
“ Whate'er you please.” I am not to be mov'd.

Cleo. Then must we part ? farewell, my cruel lord. 670
Th' appearance is against me ; and I go
Unjustifi'd for ever from your sight.
How I have lov'd you know ; how yet I love
My only comfort is I know myself :

I love you more, ev'n now you are unkind,
 Than when you lov'd me most ; so well, so truly,
 I'll never strive against it, but die pleas'd
 To think you once were mine.

Ant. Good Heav'n ! they weep at parting.

Must I weep too ? that calls 'em innocent.

683

I must not weep ; and yet I must, to think
 That I must not forgive——

Live, but live wretched ; 'tis but just you should

Who made me so : live from each other's sight ;

Let me not hear you meet. Set all the earth

And all the seas betwixt your sunder'd loves ;

View nothing common but the sun and skies.

Now all take several ways,

And each your own sad fate with mine deplore

That you were false, and I could trust no more.

690

[*Exeunt severally.*]

ACT V. SCENE I.

The Temple. Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS.

“ Charmion.

“ BE juster, Heav'n ! such virtue punish'd thus

“ Will make us think that chance rules all above,

“ And shuffles with a random hand the lots

“ Which man is forc'd to draw.”

Cleo. I could tear out these eyes that gain'd his heart,

And had not pow'r to keep it. Oh, the curse

Of doting on, ev'n when I find it dotage !

Bear witness, gods ! you heard him bid me go ;

You, whom he mock'd with imprecating vows

Of promis'd faith—I'll die, I will not bear it.

10

“ You may hold me——

[She pulls out her dagger, and they hold her.]

“ But I can keep my breath; I can die inward,

“ And choke this love.”

Enter ALEXAS.

“ *Iras.* Help, oh, Alexas, help !

“ The queen grows desperate, her soul struggles in her,

“ With all the agonies of love and rage,

“ And strives to force its passage.

Cleo. “ Let me go.”

Art thou there, traitor !——Oh,

Oh for a little breath to vent my rage !

20

“ Give, give me way, and let me loose upon him.”

Alex. Yes, I deserve it for my ill-tim'd truth.

“ Was it for me to prop

“ 'The ruins of a falling majesty,

“ To place myself beneath the mighty flaw,

“ Thus to be crush'd and pounder'd into atoms

“ By its o'erwhelming weight ? 'Tis too presuming

“ For subjects to preserve that wilful pow'r

“ Which courts its own destruction.”

Cleo. I would reason

30

More calmly with you. Did you not o'er-rule

And force my plain, direct, and open love

Into these crooked paths of jealousy ?

Now, what's th'event ? Octavia is remov'd,

But Cleopatra banish'd. “ Thou, thou, villain,

“ Hast push'd my boat to open sea, to prove

“ At my sad cost if thou canst steer it back.

“ It cannot be ; I'm lost too far ; I'm ruin'd :

“ Hence, thou impostor, traitor, monster, devil——

" I can no more : thou and my griefs have sunk 40
 " Me down so low, that I want voice to curse thee.

" *Alex.* Suppose some shipwreck'd seaman near the shore,
 " Dropping and faint with climbing up the cliff,
 " If from above some charitable hand
 " Pull him to safety, hazarding himself
 " To draw the other's weight, would he look back
 " And curse him for his pains? The case is yours ;
 " But one step more and you have gain'd the height.
 " *Cleo.* Sunk, never more to rise.

Alex. " Octavia's gone, and Dolabella banish'd." 50
 Believe me, madam, Antony is yours :
 His heart was never lost, but started off
 To jealousy, love's last retreat and covert,
 Where it lies hid in shades, watchful in silence,
 And list'ning for the sound that calls it back.
 Some other, any man, 'tis so advanc'd,
 May perfect this unfinish'd work, which I
 (Unhappy only to myself) have left
 So easy to his hand.

Cleo. Look well thou do't, else—— 60

Alex. Else what your silence threatens—Antony
 Is mounted up the Pharos, from whose turret
 He stands surveying our Egyptian galleys
 Engag'd with Cæsar's fleet : now death or conquest ;
 If the first happen, fate acquits my promise ;
 If we o'ercome, the conqueror is yours. [*A distant shout within.*

Char. Have comfort, madam : did you mark that shout ?

[*Second shout nearer.*

Iras. Hark ! they redouble it.

Alex. 'Tis from the port ;
 The loudness shows it near. Good news, kind Heav'ns !

" *Cleo.* Osiris make it so !" 71

Enter SERAPION.

Ser. Where, where's the queen ?

“ *Alex.* How frightfully the holy coward stares !

“ As if not yet recover'd of th' assault,

“ When all his gods, and what's more dear to him,

“ His off'rings were at stake.”

Ser. Oh, horror, horror !

Egypt has been ; the latest hour is come.

The queen of nations from her ancient seat

Is sunk for ever in the dark abyss :

80

Time has unroll'd her glories to the last,

And now clos'd up the volume.

Cleo. Be more plain :

Say whence thou cam'st (tho' Fate is in thy face,

Which from thy haggard eyes looks wildly out,

And threatens ere thou speak'st).

Ser. I came from Pharos,

From viewing (spare me, and imagine it)

Our land's last hope, your navy——

Cleo. Vanquish'd ?

90

Ser. No ;

They fought not.

Cleo. Then they fled.

Ser. Nor that : I saw,

With Antony, your well-appointed fleet

Row out, and thrice he wav'd his hand on high,

And thrice with cheerful cries they shouted back :

“ 'Twas then false Fortune, like a fawning strumpet

“ About to leave the bankrupt prodigal,

“ With a dissembled smile would kiss at parting,

100

“ And flatter to the last :” the well-tim'd oars

Now dipt from ev'ry bark, now smoothly run

To meet the foe ; and soon indeed they met,
But not as foes. In few, we saw their caps
On either side thrown up: th' Egyptian galleys,
Receiv'd like friends, pass'd thro', and fell behind
The Roman rear ; and now they all come forward,
And ride within the port.

Cleo. Enough, Serapion ;
I'ave heard my doom ! This needed not, you gods ! 110
When I lost Antony your work was done.
“ 'Tis but superfluous malice.” Where's my lord ?
How bears he this last blow ?

Ser. His fury cannot be express'd by words :
Thrice he attempted headlong to have fall'n
Full on his foes, and aim'd at Cæsar's galley :
Withheld, he raves on you, cries he's betray'd.
Should he now find you——

Alex. Shun him, seek your safety,
Till you can clear your innocence. 120

Cleo. I'll stay.

Alex. You must not ; haste you to the Monument,
While I make speed to Cæsar.

Cleo. Cæsar ! no ;
I have no bus'ness with him.

Alex. I can work him
To spare your life, and let this madman perish.

Cleo. Base fawning wretch ! wouldst thou betray him too ?
Hence from my sight, I will not hear a traitor :
'Twas thy design brought all this ruin on us. 130
Serapion, thou art honest ; counsel me :
But haste, each moment's precious.

Ser. Retire ; you must not yet see Antony.
He who began this mischief
'Tis just he tempt the danger : let him clear you ;

And since he offer'd you his servile tongue
To gain a poor precarious life from Cæsar,
Let him expose that fawning eloquence
And speak to Antony.

Alex. Oh Heav'ns! I dare not :
I meet my certain death.

140

Cleo. Slave, thou deserv'st it.
Not that I fear my lord will I avoid him ;
I know him noble : when he banish'd me,
And thought me false, he scorn'd to take my life :
But I'll be justify'd, and then die with him.

Alex. Oh ! pity me, and let me follow you.

Cleo. To death, if thou stir hence. Speak, if thou canst
Now for thy life, which basely thou wouldst save,
While mine I prize at this. Come, good Serapion. 150

[*Exeunt* Cleopatra, Serapion, Charmion, and Iras.

Alex. Oh, that I less could fear to lose this being,
Which, like a snow-ball in my coward hand,
The more 'tis grasp'd the faster melts away.
Poor reason ! what a wretched aid art thou !
For still in spite of thee
These two long lovers, soul and body, dread
Their final separation. Let me think ;
What can I say to save myself from death ?
No matter what becomes of Cleopatra.

159

Ant. Which way ? where ?

[*Within.*

Vent. This leads to th' Monument.

[*Within.*

Alex. Ah me ! I hear him : yet I'm unprepar'd :
My gift of lying's gone ;
And this court-devil, which I so oft have rais'd,
Forsakes me at my need. I dare not stay,
Yet cannot go far hence.

[*Exit.*

Enter ANTONY and VENTIDIUS.

Ant. Oh, happy Cæsar ! thou hast men to lead.
Think not 'tis thou hast conquer'd Antony.
But Rome has conquer'd Egypt. I'm betray'd.

“ *Vent.* Curse on this treach'rous train !

170

“ Their soil and Heav'n infect them all with baseness ;
“ And their young souls come tainted to the world
“ With the first breath they draw.

“ *Ant.* Th' original villain sure no god created ;
“ He was a bastard of the Sun by Nile ;
“ Ap'd into man with all his mother's mud
“ Crusted about his soul.”

Vent. The nation is
One universal traitor, and their queen
The very spirit and extract of 'em all.

180

Ant. Is there yet left
A possibility of aid and valour ?
Is there one god unsworn to my destruction,
“ The least unmortgag'd hope ?” for if there be
Methinks I cannot fall beneath the fate
Of such a boy as Cæsar.
“ The world's one half is yet in Antony,
“ And from each limb of it that's hew'd away,
“ The soul comes back to me.”

Vent. There yet remain
Three legions in the town ; the last assault
Lopp'd off the rest. If death be your design,
As I must wish it now, these are sufficient
To make a heap about us of dead foes,
An honest pile for burial.

190

Ant. They're enough.
We'll not divide our stars, but side by side

Fight emulous, and with malicious eyes
Survey each other's acts, "so ev'ry death
"Thou giv'st, I'll take on me as a just debt, 200
"And pay thee back a soul."

Vent. Now you shall see I love you. "Not a word
"Of chiding more." By my few hours of life,
I am so pleas'd with this brave Roman fate
That I would not be Cæsar to outlive you!
When we put off this flesh, and mount together,
I shall be shown to all th' ethereal crowd;
Lo! this is he who dy'd with Antony.

Ant. Who knows but we may pierce thro' all their troops,
And reach my veterans yet? 'Tis worth the tempting 210
"T'o'erleap this gulf of fate,
"And leave your wand'ring Destinies behind."

Enter ALEXAS trembling.

Vent. See, see that villain!
See "Cleopatra stamp'd upon that face,
"With all her cunning, all her arts of falsehood!
"How she looks out thro' those dissembling eyes!"
How he has set his count'nance for deceit,
And promises a lie before he speaks!
Let me dispatch him first. [Drawing.

"*Alex.* Oh, spare me, spare me!" 220

Ant. Hold; he's not worth your killing. On thy life
(Which thou may'st keep, because I scorn to take it),
No syllable to justify thy queen;
Save thy base tongue its office.

Alex. Sir, she's gone
Where she shall never be molested more
By love or you.

Ant. Fled to her Dolabella!

Die, traitor; I revoke my promise; die. [*Going to kill him.*]

Alex. Oh, hold, she is not fled.

230

Ant. She is; my eyes

Are open to her falsehood. My whole life
Has been a golden dream of love and friendship,
But now I wake, I'm like a merchant rous'd
From soft repose to see his vessel sinking
And all his wealth cast o'er. Ungrateful woman!
Who follow'd me but as the swallow summer,
"Hatching her young ones in my kindly beams,
"Singing her flatt'ries to my morning wake:"
But now my winter comes, she spreads her wings,
And seeks the spring of Cæsar.

240

Alex. Think not so;

Her fortunes have in all things mix'd with yours:
Had she betray'd her naval force to Rome,
How easily might she have gone to Cæsar!
Secure by such a bribe.

Vent. She sent it first,
To be more welcome after.

Ant. 'Tis too plain,
Else would she have appear'd to clear herself.

250

Alex. "Too fatally she has:" she could not bear
To be accus'd by you, but shut herself
Within her monument, look'd down and sigh'd,
While from her unchang'd face the silent tears
Dropp'd as they had not leave, but stole their parting.
Some undistinguish'd words she inly murmur'd;
At last she rais'd her eyes, and with such looks
As dying Lucrece cast——

Ant. My heart forebodes——

Vent. "All for the best." Go on.

260

Alex. She snatch'd her poniard,
And, ere we could prevent the fatal blow,
Plung'd it within her breast; then turn'd to me;
Go, bear my lord, said she, my last farewell,
And ask him if he yet suspect my faith.
More she was saying, but death rush'd betwixt.
She half pronounc'd your name with her last breath,
And bury'd half within her.

Vent. Heav'n be prais'd!

Ant. Then art thou innocent, my poor dear love! 270
And art thou dead?

Oh, those two words! their sound should be divided
Hadst thou been false and dy'd, or hadst thou liv'd
And hadst been true—But innocence and death!
This shows not well above. Then what am I?
The murd'rer of this truth, this innocence!
Thoughts cannot form themselves in words so horrid
As can express my guilt!

Vent. Is't come to this? The gods have been too gracious,
And thus you thank 'em for't. 280

Ant. [*To Alex.*] Why stay'st thou here?
“Is it for thee to spy upon my soul,
“And see its inward mourning? Get thee hence:”
Thou art not worthy to behold what now
Becomes a Roman emp'ror to perform.

“*Alex.* He loves her still; [*Aside.*
“His grief betrays it. Good! the joy to find
“She's yet alive completes the reconcilement:
“I've sav'd myself and her. But, oh! the Romans!
“Fate comes too fast upon my wit, 290
“Hunts me too hard, and meets me at each double.” [*Exit.*

Vent. Would she had dy'd a little sooner though,
Before Octavia went; you might have treated;

Now 'twill look tame, and would not be receiv'd.
Come, rouse yourself, and let's die warm together.

" *Ant.* I will not fight ; there's no more work for war ;
" The bus'ness of my angry hours is done.

" *Vent.* Cæsar is at your gate.

" *Ant.* Why, let him enter :

" He's welcome now.

300

" *Vent.* What lethargy has crept into your soul ?

" *Ant.* 'Tis but a scorn of life, and just desire

" To free myself from bondage.

" *Vent.* Do it bravely.

Ant. " I will, but not by fighting." Oh, Ventidius !
What should I fight for now ? my queen is dead :
I was but great for her : my pow'r, my empire,
Were but my merchandise to buy her love,
And conquer'd kings my factors. Now she's dead
Let Cæsar take the world——

310

" An empty circle, since the jewel's gone

" Which made it worth my strife : my being's nauseous,

" For all the bribes of life are gone away."

Vent. Would you be taken ?

Ant. Yes, I would be taken ;

But as a Roman ought, dead, my Ventidius !

" For I'll convey my soul from Cæsar's reach,

" And lay down life myself. 'Tis time the world

" Should have a lord, and know whom to obey.

" We two have kept its homage in suspense,

320

" And bent the globe, on whose each side we trod,

" Till it was dented inwards. Let him walk

" Alone upon't : I'm weary of my part.

" My torch is out, and the world stands before me

" Like a black desert at th' approach of night :

" I'll lay me down and stray no farther on.

Vent. "I could be griev'd,
" But that I'll not outlive you." Choose your death,
For I have seen him in such various shapes
I care not which I take : I'm only troubled 330
The life I bear is worn to such a rag
'Tis scarce worth giving. I could wish indeed
We threw it from us with a better grace,
That, like two lions taken in the toils,
We might at least thrust out our paws and wound
The hunters that enclose us.

" *Ant.* I have thought on't ;

" *Ventidius*, you must live.

" *Vent.* I must not, sir.

" *Ant.* Wilt thou not live to speak some good of me ? 340

" To stand by my fair fame, and guard th' approaches

" From the ill tongues of men ?

" *Vent.* Who shall guard mine

" For living after you ?

" *Ant.* Say I command it.

" *Vent.* If we die well, our deaths will speak themselves,
" And need no living witness."

Ant. Thou hast lov'd me,

And fain I would reward thee. I must die ;

Kill me, and take the merit of my death 350

To make thee friends with Cæsar.

Vent. Thank your kindness !

You said I lov'd you, and in recompense

You bid me turn a traitor ! Did I think

You would have us'd me thus ! that I should die

With a hard thought of you !

Ant. Forgive me, Roman.

Since I have heard of Cleopatra's death

My reason bears no rule upon my tongue,

But lets my thoughts break all at random out.
I 'ave thought better; do not deny me twice.

360

Vent. By Heav'n I will not!

Let it not be t' outlive you.

Ant. Kill me first,

And then die thou; for 'tis but just thou serve
Thy friend before thyself.

Vent. Give me your hand——

We soon shall meet again. Now, farewell, emperor!

[*Embrace.*]

Methinks that word's too cold to be my last:
Since death sweeps all distinctions, farewell, friend.
That's all——

370

I will not make a bus'ness of a trifle——
And yet I cannot look on you and kill you:
Pray turn your face.

Ant. I do: strike home; be sure.

Vent. Home as my sword will reach.

[*Kills himself.*]

Ant. Oh, thou mistak'st!

That wound was none of thine; give it me back:
Thou robb'st me of my death.

Vent. I do indeed;

380

But think, 'tis the first time I e'er deceiv'd you,
If that may plead my pardon. And, you gods!
Forgive me if you will; for I die perjur'd
Rather than kill my friend.

[*Dies.*]

Ant. Farewell! ever my leader, ev'n in death!
My queen and thou have got the start of me,
And I'm the lag of honour.—Gone so soon!
Is death no more! “He us'd him carelessly
“With a familiar kindness, ere he knock'd
“Ran to the door and took him in his arms,
“As who should say, you're welcome at all hours,

390

" A friend need give no warning—Books had spoil'd him,

" For all the learn'd are cowards by profession."

'Tis not worth

My further thought ; for death, for aught I know,

Is but to think no more. Here's to be satisfy'd.

[Falls on his sword.

I 'ave miss'd my heart—Oh, unperforming hand !

Thou never couldst have err'd in a worse time.

" My fortune jades me to the last ; and death,

" Like a great man, takes state, and makes me wait 400

" For my admittance"— [Trampling within.

Some, perhaps, from Cæsar !

" If he should find me living, and suspect

" That I play'd booty with my life !" I'll mend

My work ere they can reach me. [Rises upon his knees.

Enter CLEOPATRA, CHARMION, and IRAS.

Cleo. Where is my lord ? where is he ?

" *Char.* There he lies,

" And dead Ventidius by him."

Cleo. My fears were prophets ! I am come too late !

Oh, that accurs'd Alexas ! [Runs to him.

Ant. Art thou living ! 411

Or am I dead before I knew, and thou

The first kind ghost that meets me ?

" *Cleo.* Help me seat him !

" Send quickly, send for help ! [They place him in a chair.

" *Ant.* I am answer'd :

" We live both. Sit thee down, my Cleopatra !

" I'll make the most I can of life to stay

" A moment more with thee."

Cleo. How is it with you ?

Ant. 'Tis as with a man
Removing in a hurry; all pack'd up
But one dear jewel that his haste forgot,
And he for that returns upon the spur;
So I come back for thee.

Cleo. Too long, ye Heav'ns! you have been cruel to me!
Oh, now be kind, and give me back
His fleeting life!

Ant. It will not be, my love!
I keep my soul by force.

330

Cleo. 'Tis now too late
To say I'm true; I'll prove it and die with you.
Unknown to me Alexas feign'd my death,
Which when I knew I hasted to prevent
This fatal consequence. My fleet betray'd
Both you and me.

Ant. And Dolabella—

Cleo. Scarce esteem'd before he lov'd, but hated now.

Ant. Enough! my life's not long enough for more. 440
Thou say'st thou wilt come after: I believe thee;
For I can now believe whate'er thou say'st
That we may part more kindly.

Cleo. I will come:
Doubt not, my life! I'll come, and quickly too!
Cæsar shall triumph o'er no part of thee.

Ant. But grieve not while thou stay'st
My last disastrous times!
Think we have had a clear and glorious day,
And Heav'n did kindly to delay the storm
Just till our close of ev'ning. Ten years love,
And not a moment lost, but all improv'd
To th' utmost joys! What ages have we liv'd!

450

And now to die each other's! and so dying,
While hand in hand we walk in groves below,
Whole troops of lovers' ghosts shall flock about us,
And all the train be ours.

Cleo. Your words are like the notes of dying swans,
Too sweet to last. Were there so many hours
For your unkindness and not one for love! 460

Ant. No, not a minute—this one kiss—more worth
Than all I leave to Cæsar—— [Dies.

Cleo. Oh, tell me so again!
“And take ten thousand kisses for that word”—
My lord! my lord! speak, if you yet have being!
Sigh to me if you cannot speak! or cast
One look! do any thing that shows you live!

Iras. He's gone too far to hear you,
“And this you see a lump of senseless clay,
“The leavings of a soul.” 470

Char. Remember, madam,
He charg'd you not to grieve.

Cleo. And I'll obey him.
I have not lov'd a Roman not to know
What should become his wife—his wife, my Charmion!
For 'tis to that high title I aspire;
And now I'll not die less. “Let dull Octavia
“Survive to mourn him dead: my noble fate
“Shall knit our spousals with a tie too strong
“For Roman laws to break.” 480

Iras. Will you then die?

Cleo. Why shouldst thou make that question?
Fly both, and bring the cure of all our ills.

“*Iras.* Cæsar is merciful.—

“*Cleo.* Let him be so
“To those that want his mercy: my poor lord

- " Made no such covenant with him to spare me
 " When he was dead. Yield me to Cæsar's pride !
 " What ! to be led in triumph thro' the streets,
 " A spectacle to base plebeian eyes, 490
 " While some dejected friend of Antony's,
 " Close in a corner, shakes his head, and mutters
 " A secret curse on her who ruin'd him—
 " I'll none of that—
 " *Char.* Whatever you resolve
 " I'll follow, ev'n to death.
 " *Iras.* I only fear'd
 " For you, but more should fear to live without you.
 " *Cleo.* Why, now 'tis as it should be. Quick, my friends,
 " Dispatch; ere this the town's in Cæsar's hands : 500
 " My lord looks down concern'd, and fears my stay,
 " Lest I should be surpris'd :
 " Keep him not waiting for his love too long.
 " You, Charmion, bring my crown and richest jewels ;
 " With 'em the wreath of victory I made
 " (Vain augury !) for him who now lies dead :
 " You, Iras, bring the cure of all our ills."
Iras. The aspicks, madam ?
Cleo. Must I bid you twice ? [Exit Char. and Iras.
 'Tis sweet to die when they would force life on me, 510
 To rush into the dark abode of death
And meet my love,
 " And seize him first ! If he be like my love,
 " He is not frightful sure !
 " We're now alone, in secrecy and silence,
 " And is not this like lovers ? I may kiss
 " These pale cold lips—Octavia does not see me ;
 " And, oh ! 'tis better far to have him thus
 " Than see him in her arms !" —O welcome, welcome !

Enter CHARMION and IRAS, with the aspicks, &c.

“ *Char.* What must be done ? 520

“ *Cleo.* Short ceremony, friends ;

“ But yet it must be decent. First, this laurel

“ Shall crown my hero’s head : he fell not basely,

“ Nor left his shield behind him. Only thou

“ Couldst triumph o’er thyself, and thou alone

“ Wert worthy so to triumph.

“ *Char.* To what end

“ These ensigns of your pomp and royalty ?

“ *Cleo.* Dull that thou art ! why, ’tis to meet my love,

“ As when I saw him first on Cydno’s bank, 530

“ All sparkling like a goddess ; so adorn’d

“ I’ll find him once again ; my second spousals

“ Shall match my first in glory. Haste, haste, both,

“ And dress the bride of Antony !

“ *Char.* ’Tis done.

“ *Cleo.* Now set me by my lord, I claim this place,

“ For I must conquer Cæsar too like him,

“ And win my share o’ th’ world. Hail, you dear relicks

“ Of my immortal love !

“ Oh, let no impious hand remove you hence, 540

“ But rest for ever here ! let Egypt give

“ His death that peace which it deny’d his life.

“ Reach me the casket.

“ *Iras.* Underneath the fruit the aspick lies.”

Cleo. Welcome thou kind deceiver !

[Putting aside the leaves.

Thou best of thieves ! who with an easy key

Dost open life, and, unperceiv’d by us,

Ev’n steals us from ourselves, “ discharging so

“ Death’s dreadful office better than himself,

- " Made no such covenant with him to spare me
 " When he was dead. Yield me to Cæsar's pride!
 " What! to be led in triumph thro' the streets,
 " A spectacle to base plebeian eyes, 490
 " While some dejected friend of Antony's,
 " Close in a corner, shakes his head, and mutters
 " A secret curse on her who ruin'd him—
 " I'll none of that—
 " *Char.* Whatever you resolve
 " I'll follow, ev'n to death.
 " *Iras.* I only fear'd
 " For you, but more should fear to live without you.
 " *Cleo.* Why, now 'tis as it should be. Quick, my friends,
 " Dispatch; ere this the town's in Cæsar's hands: 500
 " My lord looks down concern'd, and fears my stay,
 " Lest I should be surpris'd:
 " Keep him not waiting for his love too long.
 " You, Charmion, bring my crown and richest jewels;
 " With 'em the wreath of victory I made
 " (Vain augury!) for him who now lies dead:
 " You, Iras, bring the cure of all our ills."
Iras. The aspicks, madam?
Cleo. Must I bid you twice? [Exit Char. and Iras.
 'Tis sweet to die when they would force life on me, 510
 To rush into the dark abode of death
And meet my love,
 " And seize him first! If he be like my love,
 " He is not frightful sure!
 " We're now alone, in secrecy and silence,
 " And is not this like lovers? I may kiss
 " These pale cold lips—Octavia does not see me;
 " And, oh! 'tis better far to have him thus
 " Than see him in her arms!"—O welcome, welcome!

Enter CHARMION and IRAS, with the aspicks, &c.

“ *Char.* What must be done ? 520

“ *Cleo.* Short ceremony, friends ;

“ But yet it must be decent. First, this laurel

“ Shall crown my hero’s head : he fell not basely,

“ Nor left his shield behind him. Only thou

“ Couldst triumph o’er thyself, and thou alone

“ Wert worthy so to triumph.

“ *Char.* To what end

“ These ensigns of your pomp and royalty ?

“ *Cleo.* Dull that thou art ! why, ’tis to meet my love,

“ As when I saw him first on Cydno’s bank, 530

“ All sparkling like a goddess ; so adorn’d

“ I’ll find him once again ; my second spousals

“ Shall match my first in glory. Haste, haste, both,

“ And dress the bride of Antony !

“ *Char.* ’Tis done.

“ *Cleo.* Now set me by my lord, I claim this place,

“ For I must conquer Cæsar too like him,

“ And win my share o’ th’ world. Hail, you dear relicks

“ Of my immortal love !

“ Oh, let no impious hand remove you hence, 540

“ But rest for ever here ! let Egypt give

“ His death that peace which it deny’d his life.

“ Reach me the casket.

“ *Iras.* Underneath the fruit the aspick lies.”

Cleo. Welcome thou kind deceiver !

[Putting aside the leaves.

Thou best of thieves ! who with an easy key

Dost open life, and, unperceiv’d by us,

Ev’n steals us from ourselves, “ discharging so

“ Death’s dreadful office better than himself,

“ Touching our limbs so gently into slumber, 550
 “ That Death stands by, deceiv’d by his own image,
 “ And thinks himself but Sleep.”

Ser. The queen, where is she? [Within.
 The town is yielded, Cæsar’s at the gates.

Cleo. He comes too late t’ invade the rights of Death.
 Haste, haste, my friend, and rouse the serpent’s fury.
 [Holds out her arm, and draws it back.

Coward flesh——

Wouldst thou conspire with Cæsar to betray me,
 As thou wert none of mine? I’ll force thee to’t
 And not be sent by him, 560
 But bring myself, my soul, to Antony.

[Turns aside, and then shews her arm bloody.
 Take hence; the work is done!

Ser. Break ope the door, [Within.
 And guard the traitor well.

“ *Char.* The next is ours.

“ *Iras.* Now, Charmion, to be worthy

“ Of our great queen and mistress.” [They apply the aspicks.

Cleo. Already, Death, I feel thee in my veins;
 I go with such a will to find my lord
 That we shall quickly meet. 570

A heavy numbness creeps thro’ ev’ry limb,
 And now ’tis at my head: my eyelids fall,
 And my dear love is vanish’d in a mist!

“ Where shall I find him, where? oh! turn me to him!

“ And lay me on his breast!”—Cæsar, thy worst!

Now part us if thou canst. [Dies.

[*Iras sinks down at her feet and dies, Charmion stands
 behind her chair as dressing her head.*

Enter SERAPION, two Priests, ALEXAS bound, and Egyptians.

2 Priest. Behold, Serapion, what havock death has made.

Ser. 'Twas what I fear'd.

" Charmion, is this well done ? 580

" Char. Yes, 'tis well done, and like a queen, the last

" Of her great race. I follow her. [*Sinks down. Dies.*

" Alex. 'Tis true,

" She has done well : much better thus to die,

" Than live to make a holiday in Rome."

Ser. See how the lovers lie in state together,

As they were giving laws to half mankind !

Th' impression of a smile left in her face

Shows she dy'd pleas'd with him for whom she liv'd.

And went to charm him in another world. 590

Cæsar's just ent'ring ; grief has now no leisure.

Secure that villain, as our pledge of safety,

To grace th' imperial triumph. Sleep, blest pair !

Secure from human chance long ages out,

While all the storms of fate fly o'er your tomb ;

And Fame to late posterity shall tell,

No lovers liv'd so great or dy'd so well. [*Exeunt omnes.*



EPILOGUE,

*POETS, like disputants, when reasons fail,
Have one sure refuge left, and that's to rail :
Fop, coxcomb, fool, are thunder'd thro' the pit,
And this is all their equipage of wit.
We wonder how the devil this difference grows
Betwixt our fools in verse and yours in prose ;
For, faith, the quarrel rightly understood,
'Tis civil war with their own flesh and blood.
The threadbare author hates the gaudy coat,
And swears at the gilt coach, but swears a-foot ;
For 'tis observ'd of ev'ry scribbling man,
He grows a fop as fast as e'er he can,
Prunes up, and asks the oracle, his glass,
If pink or purple best becomes his face ?
For our poor wretch ! he neither rails nor prays,
Nor likes your wit, just as you like his plays,
He has not yet so much of Mr. Bays :
He does his best, and if he cannot please,
Would quietly sue out his writ of ease ;
Yet if he might his own grand jury call,
By the fair sex he begs to stand or fall.
Let Cæsar's pow'r the men's ambition move,
But grace you him who lost the world for love.
Yet if some antiquated lady say,
The last age is not copy'd in his play,
Heav'n help the man who for that face must drudge,
Which only has the wrinkles of a judge.
Let not the young and beauteous join with those,
For should you raise such numerous hosts of foes,
Young wits and sparks he to his aid must call ;
'Tis more than one man's work to please you all.*

7 JU 52